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The Washington Monthly

JANUARY/FEBRUARY
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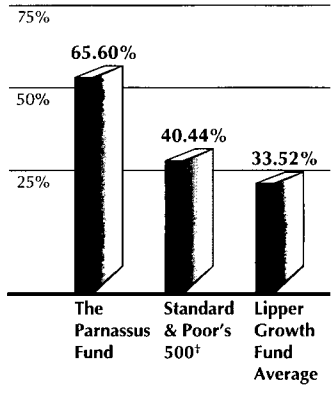

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Letters

On the Mark

Richard Blow's article on *The New Republic* was just great ("Liberalism's Flagship Adrift at Sea," Dec. 1997). I happen to be one of the many, many subscribers who canceled my subscription to the magazine because I could not bear to read one more word by Michael Kelly. The magazine was drifting far afield from liberalism before Kelly, but Kelly managed to ruin it completely. His obsessive hatred of President Clinton dominated his every word, so he had nothing to say except to spew out his unbearable viciousness. If the publisher cannot find editors or writers to restore the magazine to its old self, he should discontinue publication.

BERNICE GLICK
Reston, VA

As a *New Republic* subscriber from 1988 through early 1997, thanks ever so much for Richard Blow's dissection of why reading the nastily cynical magazine "leaves one with a bad taste in the mouth." Blow, though, skips over one important reason why *TNR* is such a turn-off. Sure, the magazine (despite its claims to ideological unpredictability) is staunchly pro-Israel and anti-affirmative action. But since Michael Kinsley's departure, it has become a haven for the most vitriolic anti-black and anti-Arab rhetoric of perhaps any magazine not on the right-wing fringe. *TNR* treats African-Americans like undisciplined children and Arabs like rats, adding a dose of ugliness to an already unpleasant mix.

MATTHEW BUDMAN
Highland Park, NJ

The piece by Richard Blow about *The New Republic* articulated beautifully the inchoate sinking feeling I've had about that magazine for the past several years. I had thought the unbearably snide tone was a British import, but I see it's infected the natives too. After 17 years, I decided I just couldn't renew my subscription.

LEAH GREENWALD
Cambridge, MA

In Defense of Cap'n Kelly

In his analysis of *The New Republic*, Richard Blow writes that Michael Kelly contributed to the magazine's decline by propagating a kind of liberalism that "was, in the most literal sense of the word, repellent. ... It was personal in nature, often singling out not the left's ideas, but its types."

Blow's evidence? Under Kelly, *TNR* was highly critical of the president, calling him a liar, a cynic, an opportunist, and quite a few other things; it mocked the former campus radicals who have grown prosperous and powerful, their leftism reduced to a Ben & Jerry's lifestyle pose; it satirized the government's war on smoking. Also, Blow regretfully notes that *TNR* published acid items about a former presidential speechwriter, a current presidential adviser, the hype and hokum of the White House conference on volunteerism, and the glib assertion of one influential mass-circulation magazine that it had discovered "20 Ways to Save the World."

Blow doesn't provide his own definition of liberalism, but from the above list of sins one would have to conclude he believes that, above all, liberals should never attack the powerful. The president is particularly off-limits: Kelly's insistence on holding Bill Clinton to the highest ethical standards disgusts Blow, for whom the fortunes of the most powerful man in the world are apparently inseparable from liberalism itself.

I worked at *TNR* under Michael Kelly, and I now find myself struggling to recall anything "repellent" about the magazine's vigorous, indeed bellicose, defense of the liberal tradition. The last time I checked, that tradition was still rooted in suspicion of power and the powerful, and opposition to all forms of bigotry and intolerance. To see Blow's misapprehension of these ideas, one only has to read one of his sentences: "If Michael Kelly's liberalism could have taken human form, it would have been an Irish cop from the 1950s, swinging his nightstick and looking out for any fairies or long-hairs who might like to mix it up a little." Why, with so many ethnic "types" available to him, did Blow single out the violent, homophobic Irish cop? I guess he was trying to make his argument more "personal in nature," Kelly being an Irish name. Nothing that ugly ever appeared in Kelly's *New Republic*. It is repellent, in the most literal sense of the word, and it's not liberalism.

WILLIAM POWERS
Washington, DC

The writer is a former senior editor of The New Republic.

What started out as a thought-provoking article quickly turned into one of the worst pieces of journalism I've read in a long time. Michael Kelly is one of the most principled journalists in the business today. He is a man of integrity who appreciates intellectual honesty. To understand his "TRB" columns, you have to realize that at heart he is a moralist with an appreciation for the beauty of words and an incredible sense of humor—traits Mr. Blow obviously lacks. Moreover, to assume that "TRB" is all *The New Republic* has to offer is ridiculous and ignores some of the outstanding cover stories that were produced under Mr. Kelly's tenure by such writers as Peter Beinart, Stephen Glass, William Powers, Hanna Rosin, and Margaret Talbot.

Mr. Blow should be ashamed of writing such drivel. And *The Washington Monthly* should be embarrassed for not giving Mr. Blow the kill fee he so rightly deserved.

SUSAN ELLINGWOOD
Washington, DC

The writer is a former assistant editor of The New Republic.

Richard Blow replies:

I did choose the Irish cop canard for a reason—to demonstrate just how offensive Michael Kelly's habit of stereotyping others was by using his own technique. Perhaps now Powers might feel a little

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more empathy for the people stereotyped and, as Powers puts it, "mocked" in Kelly's columns, who might not have realized that Kelly was promoting "opposition to all forms of bigotry and intolerance."

Susan Ellingwood is certainly right that during Kelly's tenure The New Republic *published some fine work by fine writers. And Michael Kelly was clearly a hands-on editor who inspired—and inspired loyalty from—the people whom he hired. But not knowing Kelly, I wrote about his published work, and nothing I've seen or heard since has caused me to change my opinion of it.*

A Cheese Pretender

It may be that Pilar Guzman was fired by Dean & Deluca because she did not meet the high standards they require at what is one of the finest cheese counters in America ("Edible Complex," Dec. 1997). Any reporter who claims to know about cheese and talks about "runny Stiltons" deserves to be fired. Stiltons might be creamy but they would never be runny and certainly not at Dean & Deluca.

JAMES ADAMS, CEO
UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
Washington, DC

An AARP Reality Check

There may be some meat for a story about what seniors and near-seniors like me really think versus what the AARP and politicians *believe* we think ("Tilting at Windmills," Nov. 1997). The AARP often behaves like the NRA—blinders keep both from seeing the illogic behind their positions. Upon reading your item, I thought immediately of a recent experience at my in-laws' retirement community. At dinner with my in-laws and other seniors, I asked how we might reduce social security costs over the long term. While grumbling about taxing social security payments, all understood the logic and need, so none really objected. They all supported the simple step of delaying retirement to 67 or later—gradually, of course. However, they are well past retirement, while I have retirement "on my radar screen" nine years out. So I asked my contemporaries about later retirement, and they were also supportive, albeit a bit more wary. Yet no politician will touch this one.

GARY K. KLAUMINZER
Lexington, MA

A Weak Case

Charles Peters is a lawyer at heart. He knows that "legalizing drugs" ("Tilting at Windmills," Nov. 1997) is commonly taken to mean legalizing *all* drugs for adult use. Legalizing the use of alcohol may be appropriate, but what is to be gained by legalizing the use of crack? In a continuum from the socially innocuous to the socially harmful, can society not attempt to draw any lines whatsoever? Mr. Peters simply hasn't made the case that drawing a somewhat arbitrary line is such a threat to individual freedom as to be worse than drawing none.

KENT E. ERICKSON
Glen Mills, PA

A Career Critic

Giving a Monthly Journalism Award to Anthony Lewis for his "evenhanded approach" about the Middle East (Nov. 1997) is akin to giving the Ku Klux Klan an award for lack of bias. For his entire career as a columnist, Mr. Lewis has always found fault with the Israeli position and has scarcely ever criticized any position of the PLO or any of its terrorist actions. Your giving the award also shows your bias.

JERRY STEINMAN
West Nyack, NY

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Julia's Choice • Designing for Polygamy • Auditing the IRS
When the Royalton Wasn't Royal • Losing on Lumber

The New York Times RECENTLY devoted the better part of two pages to a story entitled "A House, Ten Wives: Polygamy in Suburbia." What the *Times* found worthy of discussion in all that space was the architectural challenges of this marital arrangement: "the first question, 'how to expand the [house's] design?'" I suspect the rest of us might have been more interested in exploring the other challenges presented by 10 wives under one roof.

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ONE OF THE MORE TROUBLING of today's trends is the way America is tuning out politics. According to a poll by Pew Research Center, the percentage of people who say they follow domestic policy news "very closely" or even "fairly closely" has declined from 62 to 51 in just the last four years. "There's a danger in not paying attention," observes *Knight-Ridder's* R.A. Zaldivar, whose story brought the Pew poll to my attention. "When people are distracted, government has a way of producing unpleasant surprises." As far as I can see, the only good that has come from this growing indifference is that the buckrakers, the Washington journalists who peddle their punditry on the lecture circuit, are seeing their speaking fees shrink. The income from speeches of one of the circuit's stars dropped from $466,625 in 1992 to under six figures last year, according to a recent report in *The New York Times*. Maybe now these fellows will go back to their real job, reporting. And, if instead of just being snide about political folly, they accurately describe the essential functions that government performs, their readers just might see that it's stupid not to pay attention.

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HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF iatrogenic illness? It's a disease you acquire while in the care of physicians. And it's not just a tiny little problem. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 2.4 million Americans get infected in a hospital each year, causing or contributing to 100,000 deaths.

What's even more unsettling is that the CDC says most of these infections could be prevented if health-care providers would just wash their hands. But, according to studies reported in *The Washington Post*, as few as 14 percent of physicians and 25 percent of nurses regularly wash their hands between patients.

Those who assume private industry is always more efficient than government should consider recent revelations about E.D.S., Union Pacific, and Commonwealth Edison.

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GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE ITS shortcomings, but those who assume private industry is always more efficient than government should consider recent revelations about E.D.S., Union Pacific, and Commonwealth Edison. Just recently Union Pacific messed up the merger of its operations with Southern Pacific, causing freight delays that have already cost Texas businesses $762 million according to *The New York Times*. *The Times* also reports that Commonwealth Edison has grossly mismanaged its nuclear plants, creating, among other dangers, the most troublesome nuclear incident of the last decade. Still another *Times* article describes foul-ups by Electronic Data Systems, which is under contract to handle the government's student loan program. So the government looks bad but the real fault lies with private industry, in this case E.D.S.

The truth is that any organization, whether public or private, can go bad. Union Pacific used to be great, so did the IRS. Never assume any organization will stay good. The private sector in America became fat and uncompetitive in the 1970s because of a lack of constructive criticism. The same thing happened to the government but liberals didn't want to face the problems and conservatives, more devoted to less government than better government, didn't want to fix them.

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IF YOU'VE SEEN PHOTOGRAPHS OF the timber cutting in our national forests, you're probably distressed about the damage this logging does to the environment. But, you may think, the government uses the

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profits to reduce the deficit. Last year, however, the government lost money on the sale of timber from the national forests—$14.7 million to be exact.

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GOOD NEWS! GASOLINE POWERED leaf-blowers have been outlawed by the Los Angeles City Council. These machines from hell should be banned everywhere. Not only is the noise unbearable, they are big-time polluters. The Southern California Air Quality Management District says operating a leaf-blower for one hour makes the same amount of pollution as driving a car 300 miles. And the pollution is concentrated in one spot, which is not good news when that spot happens to be next door.

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"WE'RE NO LONGER THINKING about prolonged nuclear war," Gen. Eugene E. Habiger, commander of the United States Strategic Command near Omaha, recently told *The New York Times*. What's incredible is that for years that's exactly what our military was thinking about. Thousands of targets were picked that would be hit as we slugged it out with the Reds in a long nuclear nightmare. Among them were Russian bridges selected solely on the basis of how long they were and a minor Siberian outpost that an American general who last visited it found to be of absolutely no military significance. For this information about silly targets I'm indebted to a marvelous piece by R. Jeffrey Smith in *The Washington Post Magazine* about Gen. George Lee Butler, the former head of the Strategic Command who has dedicated himself to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

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THE STATE OF FLORIDA WAS TO receive $11.3 billion in the settlement of its case against the tobacco companies. The only catch was that its lawyers were claiming as much as $2.8 billion in legal fees. But Circuit Judge Harold Jeffrey Cohen ruled against them, pointing out that the fee they were claiming amounted to $7,716 an hour for each of the attorneys and would have required them to work 24 hours a day for the 42 months that the case lasted.

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ANOTHER MARVELOUS PIECE—this one by David Plotz in *Slate*—describes how New York's chic Royalton hotel is supported by the expense accounts of Si Newhouse's editors and writers. When Graydon Carter, Anna Wintour, and other Newhouse editors and sub-editors lunch at the Royalton, the tab for two can be $80, and that's without fancy wine.

I couldn't help but be reminded of the old days when a less grand Royalton was the official New York residence of *The Washington Monthly*. This was in 1968-69 when we were making frequent trips to New York to recruit writers, investors, and advertisers. At this pre-Ian Schrager, unfancified Royalton, the minimum room, which was alas often our choice, went for $8.50. If you wanted to live it up, you could get the deluxe room for $17. Room service was provided by a luncheonette next door. They never seemed to understand scrambled eggs soft, but since the check came to less than $2 including juice, toast, and coffee, I forgave them.

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DURING THE SENATE'S MOST recent session, Republicans using a device called a hold "effectively stalled the confirmation process for 42 nominees" to fill vacant seats in the federal government, according to *The Washington Post*'s Bill McAllister. All a senator has to do to place a hold on a nomination is to write a letter to the majority leader. Originally the device, which is not, by the way, provided for in the rules of the Senate, "evolved as a courtesy for senators who could not be present when a vote was scheduled, or who needed time to bone up on a subject before ... debate began," explains the congressional scholar Norman Ornstein.

But in the last decade this innocent practice has been turned into a technique for killing nominations or to use the nominee as a hostage to extort favors from the administration. My friend Nancy Ann Min-DeParle's nomination to be administrator of Medicare was delayed for several months by Sen. Jon Kyl not because there was anything wrong with DeParle, but because the senator wanted the administration to change its Medicare billing procedures and to give Arizona more Medicaid money.

Jesse Helms' hold didn't just delay William Weld's nomination to be ambassador to Mexico, it killed it. What amazed me at the time was how much of the media accepted this as the way things are. To request a hold is not authorized by law. It is a gift to the prima donnas of the Senate that could and should be abolished. All it will take, I'm convinced, is a generous helping of ridicule from the nation's editorial writers and cartoonists.

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THE PENTAGON'S COST-CUTTING is clearly slicing right down to the bone. The latest evidence is a memo from Robert L. Ellis, the commandant of Naval District Washington. Use of the district's motorpool limousines and sedans "will generally be restricted" to admirals and senior executive service civilians.

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WASHINGTON'S MAYOR, MARION Barry, says he has given up crack. But he appears to have replaced it with another substitute for work—travel. This year the mayor, while his city has been falling apart, has made trips to Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Korea, and China. "Let me remind the citizens of Washington that Washington is an international city," Barry recently said, "and part of my official duties is to be a goodwill ambassador."

Of course when the mayor is not absorbed by his diplomatic duties, he's all business. Witness the recent lease he entered into with the MCI Center for a $625,000 sky box

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that would have afforded the mayor, according to *The Washington Post*'s Yolanda Woodlee, a splendid view of the basketball and hockey games that are played there as well as "12 theater-style seats with two remote-control televisions, a telephone, a refrigerator, an ice machine, and individually controlled heat and air conditioning ... four bar stools ... [a] quartet of comfortable arm chairs, upholstered to ... the box owner's taste [that] surround a coffee table in the mirror-walled lounge."

The lease was finally overruled by the D.C. financial control board. But before the board voted on the matter its chairman, Andrew Brimmer, who is supposed to be the responsible adult overseeing the mayor, actually fought for the lease. Some days it's hard to have hope.

Marion Barry says he has given up crack. But he appears to have replaced it with another substitute for work—travel.

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THE BAD NEWS IS THAT YOUNG people today aren't interested in careers in government, according to a recent survey by Peter Hart and Robert Teeter. The good news is that they're interested in teaching. Seventy-six percent of our young Democrats and 66 percent of young Republicans ranked teaching as the most appealing career. This could signify a growing respect for teaching that may lead more of them to actually choose it as a career.

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IF ALL THOSE TRAFFIC JAMS you've been enduring have led you to suspect that there are too many cars on the road, you're right. There are now 176 million vehicles in the United States. That means that there is one for every driver. And sometimes the driver has more than one car. Indeed, since 1969, according to the Department or Transportation, the number of households with three or more vehicles has grown from 4.6 percent in 1969 to 18.7 percent today. And I used to think that the two-car family was pretty fancy!

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WHEN AN FAA INSPECTOR DISCOVERS a safety violation at an aircraft repair facility, does he or some other FAA inspector check back to find out if the violation has been corrected? No, reports the General Accounting Office. The GAO looked at the records of 172 violations. In a quarter of the cases the records showed no response from the violator to the inspection complaint. In the other three-quarters there was no way of telling whether the FAA had approved what the violator did to correct the problem.

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DO YOU REMEMBER HOW CLINTON pledged to cut 250,000 jobs from the executive branch? Well he's done even better. There has been, according to *The Washington Post*'s Mike Causey, a reduction of 308,624. This is a considerable accomplishment for which the administration deserves praise. There are, however, several matters that worry me. Fewer than 10 percent of the jobs lost were through firing, meaning that too much dead wood remains, and one fears too many able employees were allowed to take early retirement. Worse still, there were hiring freezes, which means the government wasn't attracting the fresh talent it desperately needs.

I know I have beaten this drum awfully hard but I do become alarmed because no one else is talking about the government talent shortage. One exception is David Broder, who recently wrote that he was told by two former IRS commissioners that the agency's real problem was the decline in the quality of its lawyers and accountants.

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THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL League can be severe in its punishment of players who use drugs. Leon Lett of the Dallas Cowboys, for example, just finished serving a year's suspension. But, as Dan Daly, a sports columnist for *The Washington Times* points out, the NFL is much gentler in its treatment of players who maim other players sometimes intentionally. The worst punishment meted out to even the most vicious is a fine, even though they may have inflicted permanent injury on one of their opponents.

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AS FOR THE IRS' OTHER PROBlems, I see three. One, which I won't explore because so many other writers have pointed it out, is the hideously complicated code Congress has given it to administer. Another I probably should discuss at some length because I have seen it so often in other agencies. It is the grotesque results that the pressure to meet goals can produce. The horror stories from the IRS' Arkansas-Oklahoma district featured in the congressional hearings are just another example of the harm this pressure can do, of which the body count in Vietnam is the best known.

So why don't they get rid of the goals? The problem with that solution is that it can lead to a lot of long lunches. Employees need goals in order to perform at their best. So what can be done to avoid the bad effects that goals often have? The answer is first to make sure the goals are reasonable. The second is for the people who run the agency to make sure they know what the people in the field are doing to achieve the goals. In the case of the IRS, this means auditing the auditors. In other words, random spot checks of what IRS agents are doing to achieve the goals. That way you will uncover a pattern of bad behavior such as occurred in the

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Arkansas-Oklahoma district. And when you find real wrongdoing by employees such as what took place in that district, you should fire the offender. Instead here's what the IRS did to the district's two main culprits: One was permitted to retire with a nice pension, the other transferred.

In defense of the IRS, there are a lot of greedy crooks in the country, people who delight in cheating the government. We don't want IRS employees to be nice to such people. We want them to be tough. We want them to collect what's due to Uncle Sam so the rest of us won't have to pay more than our fair share.

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THURMOND, WEST VIRGINIA, has a beautifully restored train station. What's wrong with that, you ask? The restoration cost the National Park Service $2.5 million at a time when, according to *Knight-Ridder*'s Frank Greve, zero dollars were being allotted for construction projects in such major national parks as Yellowstone and Grand Teton. And one other thing: Thurmond's population is eight. That's right, eight people.

What distinguishes Thurmond is that it's only a few miles from the home of Sen. Robert Byrd, who was chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee at the time the money was slipped into the budget.

•••••••••

"WHO'S GOING TO BUY ALL this economic output?" asks William Greider in a recent op-ed piece in *The New York Times*. He cites an article in *The Economist* that says the automobile industry will be able to produce nearly 80 million vehicles by the year 2000 for a market of fewer than 60 million buyers. The big problem, as Hedrick Smith notes in this issue of the *Monthly*, is that wages aren't rising. At the same time consumer debt is mounting, so Greider's question is more than a little troubling.

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REMEMBER THE ITEM I WROTE IN our November issue saying I was suspicious about Thomas E. Dewey's pardon of Lucky Luciano? Soon after the item appeared I received a letter from a son of David Dressler, who had worked for the New York Parole Board at the time. After his father died, the son found in his papers an unsigned affidavit describing how Dewey had pressured the Parole Board to recommend commutation of Luciano's sentence and how Dewey was "piqued at our insistence that a thorough investigation be made of the claim that Luciano had contributed to the war effort." Dewey accused the board chairman of being "overcautious" and "paranoid." Dressler was told by the chairman that "it was obvious that Governor Dewey was not going to take 'No' for an answer." So it appears that my suspicions were correct. But we can't know for certain because of the inconvenient fact that the affidavit was not signed.

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THAT WRITERS AND EDITORS would go a long way to line up a celebrity interview and cover story was pointed out by Joshua Wolf Shenk last year in these pages ("Basest Instinct," June 1996). But it now seems that some of them are willing to walk the last mile. In order to gain access to Julia Roberts, *Harper's Bazaar*, according to *The Wall Street Journal*'s Patrick M. Reilly, "agreed to let the actress decide on her own interviewer."

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NEW YORK CITY'S PUBLIC school principals cannot be transferred from their buildings without the union's permission. And they cannot be demoted or expelled without lengthy disciplinary hearings. It's odd that a school system that is able to tell its pupils that they have failed cannot tell its principals the same thing.

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A Fast-Track Reality Check

A veteran reporter looks at the not-so-nifty side of NAFTA

By Hedrick Smith

LIKE MANY OTHER LONG-TIME free traders, I was persuaded (in retrospect, perhaps lulled) by the arguments in favor of NAFTA, the treaty that created a common market linking Mexico, Canada, and the United States, when it passed Congress in late 1993. You remember the pitch: Not only would American consumers benefit from cheaper products, but a job boom in Mexico would presumably slow the flow of illegal Mexican immigrants into California and Texas. Besides, it was argued, after more than a decade of increasing global competition, there was no way to build an economic moat around the continental U.S. to protect our industry.

Yes, like others, I was troubled by the prospect of a continuing loss of American manufacturing jobs to low-wage economies such as Mexico, but Ross Perot's dire image of "a giant sucking sound" echoing across America as 6 million middle-class jobs drained south of the border seemed a colorful but off-the-wall exaggeration. Certainly I understood that there would be economic pain across the Midwest heartland, the Northeast, and various other industrial pockets—especially in the auto and electronics industries—as American companies leapt to cut costs by jumping production facilities to Tijuana and Baja California, or to the Mexican beltway of factories, called "maquiladoras," just across the Rio Grande from southern Texas. But the work going to Mexico involved low-skilled, low-paying industrial jobs that American workers wouldn't want, and anyway, those jobs were already being exported to Singapore, Indonesia, and China. Furthermore, Congress would provide money to retrain NAFTA-displaced U.S. workers for better, higher-skilled jobs.

Finally, and most fundamentally, the iron logic of the global free market dictated that as jobs moved south of the border, Mexican wages and living standards would rise toward American levels, Mexico would become a richer consumer market for American-made products, and the balance of trade between Mexico and the United States would tilt in America's favor. At least, that's the argument that Neil Whiteley-Ross, vice president of San Diego's Economic Development Corporation, made to me. "Our view is, if we can make Tijuana stronger, then their per capita income will increase, their consumption in San Diego will increase, our tax base will increase," Ross asserted. "They will need more products. They will buy more San Diego, and over time, we'll blur that border."

But recent reporting on both sides of the border for a new PBS series, "Surviving the Bottom Line," has sobered me considerably on NAFTA and suggests that it's time for a reality check on some of the basic flaws in the pro-NAFTA logic.

To be sure, the scorecard on NAFTA is far from complete. And while it's true that Ross Perot's "giant sucking sound" did not materialize, at least 150,000 American workers have been certified as having suffered NAFTA-related job losses. Given the difficulties of certification, some economists put the actual total of jobs lost at several hundred thousand.

Even more fundamentally, something went badly wrong with the "iron logic" of the market. The anticipated growth in Mexican consumers' appetite and purchasing power for American-made goods has not materialized. America's $5.4 billion favorable balance of trade with Mexico in 1992 has shifted to an $18 billion American trade deficit in 1996. Some of the shift is

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attributable to the collapse of the Mexican peso in 1994, but the negative trade swing began before the peso plunged.

Note, moreover, this shift did not occur because Mexico's homegrown industry suddenly began to outcompete American rivals. It occurred primarily because such global giants as Sony, Matsushita, Samsung, and Panasonic found that NAFTA ensured their entry into the American market through the back door: produce in Mexico, sell in the USA. Under NAFTA's North American common market, Mexico has, for trade purposes, become a part of the USA. So goods made in Mexico meet American requirements for local content. This saves Japanese and Korean electronics companies from paying most American duties on their Mexican-based exports.

Since NAFTA, billions of dollars of foreign industrial investments have poured into Mexico. In Tijuana, there are more than 600 maquiladora factories, enjoying both Mexican and American trade privileges, and employing more than 140,000 workers. "We're doing product now that we didn't even dream about in the '60s, that didn't even exist—for computers, for microprocessors, for the medical and electronics industries," asserts John Riley, an American businessman who operates four maquiladora plants and heads a regional maquiladora trade association.

Despite gleaming new micro-electronic clean rooms, the increasing complexity of the work, and the production boom in Mexico's new industrial belts, the wages, living standards, and purchasing power of the Mexican maquiladora workforce have not risen. This is a gaping hole in the NAFTA theory. Mexican workers are not enjoying the fruits of the NAFTA boom. According to Mexican labor statistics and analysis by American economists and scholars, such as Harley Shaiken of the University of California at Berkeley, average workers in Mexican industry, including the high-tech maquiladoras, now earn about half of what they made in 1980. Maquiladora workers average a little more than $1 an hour.

In short, NAFTA's impact is the opposite of what was predicted. Instead of the American economy exerting an upward pull on Mexican wages, the Mexican economy has exerted a downward pull on American wages. And the idea of crowds of Mexicans crossing the border to shop in San Diego is a pipe-dream.

Mexican wages stay "anchored to the bottom," according to analysts such as Shaiken, because the Mexican government exerts pressure on weak Mexican trade unions to set low wages as an inducement to foreign investors; and because foreign and Mexican employers collaborate through their maquiladora trade associations to keep wages low, warning each other that resorting to wage increases to compete for workers will cause dangerous wage spirals. This point was driven home to me during a visit to a Japanese-owned electronics plant making computer memory devices. The plant's Mexican manager was explaining his problems with high turnover among his 300 workers—close to 100 percent a year. I asked the manager why he didn't raise his workers' pay to keep them on the job, and he replied that he couldn't because he had to pay what his competitors paid and not more.

"The irony is, with all the talk about free trade, we have highly controlled labor markets when it comes to wage setting," observes Shaiken. "When you combine Mexican government policy, weak unions or government-dominated unions, and employers who are collaborating in these areas, what you get are very low wages in combination with high productivity."

The drag effect of Mexico and other low-wage foreign countries is one major reason why, even with unemployment at a 24-year low, the income of the average American household today is lower than it was in 1989. "When wages remain low in Tijuana, it exerts a chilling effect on wages in Milwaukee and Detroit, in Stockton, California, and elsewhere," asserts Shaiken. "And employers haven't been shy about making that point. Just the threat of moving a plant to Tijuana causes wages to go down in numerous industries within the United States."

To make matters worse, the skill and productivity of Mexican workers is rising rapidly. This enables Mexicans to compete for more and more middle-class American jobs, and as John Riley told me, this trend will escalate in the years ahead. "I can't project the technology, but I know that Tijuana can keep up with the need for technical people and the ability to assemble and build the products," says Riley. "Mexico is a very young country. They're putting over a million workers a year into the marketplace. These people are being more educated than they have been in the past, and they're a very good work force."

In short, the Mexican drag effect on American living standards is most likely to spread in the years ahead. This is the flaw that undermines the free-trade argument. As long as Mexican (and other developing-world) wages are kept low as a matter of government policy, inadequate labor rights, or collusion among employers, the living standard of the American middle class will continue to erode. To work fairly and effectively, NAFTA needs fixing to overcome this obstacle, and so does any future trade agreement. ●

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Meet the (Black) Press

What black newspapers can teach the mainstream media—and what they can learn from them

BY JARRETTE FELLOWS JR.

LAST SUMMER THE CALIFORNIA GENERAL Assembly debated and passed a new welfare-to-work law that will radically overhaul the state's entitlement program. But although the debate was contentious, the mainstream media had little trouble boiling it down for public consumption: As far as the media was concerned, this was a black-and-white issue—a simple story of angry white taxpayers taking on equally angry black welfare mothers who saw themselves as being targeted for elimination from the welfare rolls because of their race. However, as the managing editor of the *L.A. Watts Times*, a newspaper aimed at African-Americans, I was aware of another story: The fact is that African-Americans who go to work every day and who pay taxes deride the overburdened state welfare system just as much as—if not more than—their white counterparts. For years, employed blacks have been critical of the debilitating dependence on government aid that welfare has caused many in the black community to develop, sapping them of their motivation, ambition, and self-reliance. Yet the mainstream news outlets were so busy playing up the racial angle that they completely ignored this large segment of the black population. They also failed to make clear that the bulk of Californians on welfare happen to be white.

Sadly, the media's inaccurate portrayal of black Americans is not limited to their coverage of welfare. Audiences are bombarded with negative images of black men, whether it's convicted drug dealer "Freeway" Ricky Ross or slain rapper Tupac Shakur, Rodney King or O.J. Simpson. Positive stories on blacks tend to focus on mainstream entertainers and athletes like Michael Jordan, Denzel Washington, or Ken Griffey Jr. Meanwhile, far more uplifting black role models like former NASA astronauts Mae Jemisons and Guion Blufors or black members of Congress go unnoticed. What emerges is a one-dimensional portrait of blacks in America: If they're not committing a crime or leeching off society, they are running, jumping, joking, or singing.

The simplistic and inaccurate slant that dominates news coverage of blacks certainly does little to improve the self-image of the African-American community—in fact, it may have a great deal more to do with the general apathy and low self-esteem of many African-Americans than we fully appreciate. Furthermore, the media's biased reporting only fuels racial strife and misunderstanding by widening the already huge gulf of ignorance between blacks and whites.

It is this state of affairs that makes black-oriented newspapers so valuable. Their editors have both a responsibility and an opportunity to tell the stories that their mainstream counterparts ignore—in short, to present a real, objective view of African-Americans. By and large, they do a good job, serving up everything from profiles of local heroes to unique perspectives on national issues that affect African-Americans. But in their quest to promote a more positive image of the black community, many black papers—either by choice or as a result of pressure from the community—are unwilling to take on the failures and misdeeds of black leaders or institutions. And far from serving the community, the papers' hesitancy to level legitimate criticisms on certain issues not only undermines the credibility of the black press but also protects those who are operating without the best interests of the community at heart. If black papers truly want to serve their constituents, they must move beyond this type of protectionism and present both the good and the bad (i.e. a truly balanced view) of their communities.

JARRETTE FELLOWS JR. *is the managing editor of the* L.A. Watts Times

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The Good News

The community spirit that motivates so many African-American newspapers today draws on a 170-year legacy of journalistic activism. The first black newspapers were founded for the express purpose of spreading the word against slavery. Blacks couldn't trust white editors to champion their causes. So they started crusading newspapers of their own, such as *Freedom's Journal*, founded in 1827, and *Ram's Horn* and Frederick Douglass' *The North Star*, both founded in 1847.

After the Civil War, hundreds of black newspapers sprang up to inform, instruct, and agitate on behalf of African-Americans, reporting to hundreds of thousands of readers on everything from landmark legal cases to black society. Nineteenth-century black journalist T. Thomas Freeman, an ardent militant on racial matters, founded the *New York Freeman* in 1884 to advocate the establishment of a National Afro-American League to fight disenfranchisement, black lynchings, and other injustices. During World War II, the total circulation of black newspapers in the U.S. topped 1 million. Some of the publications that led the call for equality were the *Philadelphia Tribune*, the (Baltimore) *Afro-American*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

Today, the specific issues may have changed, but the mission remains the same: to share stories important to the black community that other mainstream publications overlook. The *Watts Times* provides a case study of how this is done. For instance, during the "Trial of the Century," *Watts Times* reporters went in search of African-Americans who were as adamant about O.J. Simpson's guilt as many whites. Had the mainstream media—and more black newspapers and black radio programs—presented a similarly balanced view, they might have helped to diffuse the racial animosity that deepened between blacks and whites in the aftermath of the not-guilty verdict.

Similarly, when the *San Jose Mercury News* published its allegation that the CIA helped bring crack into Los Angeles, the *Watts Times*, unlike so many other media outlets, chose not to focus on the high-profile campaign by U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters to "reveal the truth" about the CIA. We thought a more responsible course of action would be to print an in-depth series on the devastation wrought by crack cocaine in the inner city since 1980, in the hopes of focusing attention on the greater problem of the proliferation of crack to an enormous dependent population. Rather than pointing fingers and slinging accusations, we wanted to help communities outside the inner city understand why many African-Americans were so outraged by the allegations against the CIA.

The *Watts Times* also makes an effort to seek out and broadcast the good news about African-Americans that is so rarely heard. One example is the paper's recent profile of an African-American grassroots organization called MADDADS that is aggressively working to take back its community from street gangs and drug dealers through 24-hour street patrols; another is the story we ran on a local Christian ministry group that spends Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays preparing 1,000 meals for the homeless. Yet a third is a piece we did on Carl McJunkin, a black 18th-century cowboy-paleontologist who discovered the skeletal remains of a prehistoric bison in Colorado. In addition to its entertainment value, the story emphasized a little-known aspect of black history—that African-American pathfinders have not been limited to orators, revolutionaries, and abolitionists.

In fact, many of the stories covered by the *Watts Times*, while interesting in their own right, also carry broader lessons. For instance, the paper recently reported on how white moviemaker Michael McMeel founded the Awareness Foundation, which introduces inner-city kids to the outdoors through camping excursions to horse ranches in the California countryside. The *Watts Times* was interested in the story not only because it was a first-time adventure for many young black, Latino, and Asian youngsters, but because it demonstrated to blacks and whites alike that the two groups can come together for positive change. This is something all Los Angelenos could have benefited from learning about. Yet not one mainstream newspaper, TV news station, or radio outlet picked up the story.

The Bad News

All of the good that black papers do only makes their shortcomings more disheartening. Particularly disappointing, though far too typical of the black and mainstream media alike, is the sacrifice of journalistic standards for the sake of "what sells." Much of the blame for this tendency among black newspapers can be laid at the door of *Chicago Defender* founder Robert Sengstacks Abbott, who set a new standard in the early 1920s when he abandoned the moral tone common to black newspapers of the day and patterned the *Defender* after William Randolph Hearst's sensationalist tabloids, smearing his front pages with accounts of crime and scandal. To be sure, the formula was commercially successful, attracting a voracious readership. By 1935, the *Defender's* circulation was 230,000. However, the new approach also diminished the service these black newspapers were providing to the black community.

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Today, too many African-American newspapers still follow the *Defender*'s example, presenting multiple pages of sensational material—usually crime stories—and perpetuating the very misconceptions they criticize mainstream papers for harboring. To be sure, the black newspapers usually augment their coverage with news of black society and religion, but their focus on lurid stories threatens to distract them from their mission to provide a different perspective on the news.

An equally grave threat to that mission is the reluctance of many black newspapers to challenge black leaders who abuse the public's trust. In many cases this is because the papers' precarious financial situation makes them particularly vulnerable to retaliation by those leaders. The *Watts Times* has experienced such retaliation first hand. Last year, we published a story on the incorporation of parking meters in a black art-renaissance district called Leimert Park. The move was opposed by area businesses that worried that the one-hour limit on the meters would discourage potential customers. The *Watts Times* published a story on the issue that was misunderstood by a Leimert Park merchant as an endorsement of the meters. Through the local merchants' association he began organizing a campaign to cancel all advertisements with the *Watts Times*, and burn any future editions of the newspaper that were distributed to the area. Fortunately the merchants' association eventually recognized its error and backed down. But the point is black leadership loathes criticism, and reacts to it even more venemously when it comes from within the black community.

It is this attitude and, more importantly, the fear it strikes in the heart of the owners of black newspapers, that prevents black papers, including the *L.A. Watts Times*, from running pieces that cast a critical eye on black leaders. As a result, many black leaders and organizations are untouchable. The First African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Los Angeles is a case in point. The church, whose membership tops 15,000 and includes some of the most widely known African-Americans in the nation, is run by the Rev. Cecil "Chip" Murray. During the 1992 riots, Murray received praise for providing a much needed voice of calm and reason. In the aftermath of the riots, the church was chosen to act as a clearinghouse for private financial aid in the form of micro loans to undercapitalized businesses in South Central. Over the months and years since the rioting, a number of major corporations, including Disney, Texaco, and Bank of America, have poured millions of dollars into the program. Yet, since the program's inception, numerous small business owners in South Central have complained to the *Watts Times* that they have received little benefit because, they allege, the church's lending practices are corrupt. According to these reports, only members of the church have managed to obtain loans. The church may be completely innocent of any wrongdoing, but at the very least, the complaints the *Watts Times* has received seem worth investigating further. However, the church happens to be a loyal advertiser in the *Watts Times*. So the *Watts Times*' publisher has prohibited any discussion of the church's loan program in the pages of our paper. As for the mainstream media, they have proven to be completely uninterested in the story.

Similarly, I have long wanted to publish an op-ed piece criticizing Louis Farrakhan for his racist and anti-Semitic rantings—and to point out that they merely undermine his positive work, such as encouraging blacks to build up their own enterprises and create jobs in impoverished communities. However, the *Watts Times* ownership is fearful that such a commentary would offend L.A.'s Black Muslims, who have been faithful readers and loyal advertisers.

Even when ad revenue is not at stake, many black papers take the view that it is not their place to air the dirty laundry of the black community. You'd be hard pressed to find even one op-ed this year in any black publication that focused a critical eye on prominent black leaders like the Rev. Jesse Jackson, or Rep. Maxine Waters. I am not saying that either of these leaders is guilty of any egregious sins, but surely black publications should not grant them sainthood status and the immunity from journalistic scrutiny that goes with it. But even when black leaders do commit egregious offenses, black newspapers tend to respond by circling the wagons in their defense. For example, in 1995, when former U.S. Rep. Walter Tucker was videotaped accepting a bribe and sentenced to nine years in prison, most black newspapers portrayed the story as a government plot to harm black leaders.

But it is the black community that's really being harmed. We cannot expect to have good leaders if we do not hold them accountable. And by failing to do so, black newspapers are also undermining their own viability. True, in the short term the black papers' timid approach enables them to hold onto the revenue from local advertisers. But in the long run, this strategy will only destroy their readers' respect for black newspapers, causing a decline in readership that will eventually cause local advertisers to abandon them anyway. ●

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Tidbits & Outrages

The Comandante Knows His Aristophanes

Colombia's military chief has suggested that the wives and lovers of leftist rebels and right-wing paramilitary groups go on a "sex strike" until their husbands agree to negotiate a peace accord.

What Will They Sell at the Gift Shop?

Malaysia's Minister of Culture has suggested that mass circumcisions of local children be marketed as tourist attractions.

ART: RENEE WINFIELD

Where is Bob Dole When You Need Him?

Time Warner has released a new single by the musical group Prodigy called "Smack My Bitch Up."

And They Were Sacrificing Frogs in Biology Class

A Pittsburgh woman has decided to home-school her children because she believes the local school's "Blue Devil" mascot glorifies Satan.

Just Think What Synthetic Pants Could Do

A British conference on "the health dangers posed by clubbing" has identified a new ailment: "clubber's nipple"—caused by jumping up and down repeatedly in synthetic clothing.

Never Traffick on a Full Stomach

South African authorities recently caught a Venezuelan man trying to smuggle 99 condoms full of cocaine in his stomach.

Last Tango in Kabul

The Islamic Taliban that rules much of Afghanistan recently imprisoned 10 men for watching someone dance to music.

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Capitol Hill's Longest-Running Outrage

Congress winks while the mining companies shaft the taxpayers

By Sen. Dale Bumpers

Joining the Senate in 1975 was a traumatic experience for me. I had been governor of Arkansas for four years and I was accustomed to making policy, giving my approval to legislation that I thought had merit, vetoing legislation that didn't, and, in general, making things happen with the stroke of a pen. But the Senate is an altogether different place, and for those without yards of patience, an often maddening one. It is virtually impossible to accomplish anything significant without spending years shepherding, pleading, cajoling, begging, explaining, and compromising with your colleagues. And all that effort does not even guarantee a favorable result, or a result that hasn't been watered down until it's hardly recognizable.

I've learned this lesson the hard way. This is the ninth agonizing year of my effort to reform the Mining Law of 1872, signed by Ulysses S. Grant and intended to entice people to "go West" and settle. My successes have been marginal. Because I will leave the Senate at the end of the year, the conclusion of my fourth term, I have redoubled my efforts. But unless the American people are somehow awakened to this little-known abuse, I have no reason to be optimistic.

This archaic, 125-year-old law permits mining companies to gouge billions of dollars worth of gold, silver, platinum, palladium, and other hardrock minerals from public lands, without paying one red cent to the real owners, the American people. And these same companies often leave the unsuspecting taxpayers with the bill for the billions of dollars required to clean up the environmental mess left behind. The Mining Law is as much a relic of bygone frontier days as the sod hut and the covered wagon. The era of the grizzled prospector seeking a fortune with a pickax, a tin pan, and a burro are long past. Today's prospectors are multinational corporations that scar and ravage the land with giant earth-moving machines and lethal acids like cyanide. But although our attitudes toward public resources have changed since the 19th century, the Mining Law has remained virtually untouched.

Even more galling, the same mining industry that benefits so handsomely from Congress' generosity has successfully used its money and lobbying influence to preserve this sweetheart deal. Meanwhile, members of Congress who perpetuate this unbelievable scam are never held accountable, because the public knows little, if anything, about the abuse. While this outrage surpasses most scandals that receive massive press coverage, it continues to escape notice.

Here's how the law works: Anyone, and I mean anyone, can drive four stakes into the ground on federally owned lands in the West, delineate the four corners of a 20-acre tract, and file a hardrock-mining claim on that 20 acres. There's no limit on how many claims one may own, and the claim will remain in effect as long as the owner pays $100 a year per claim.

What's more, whereas oil, gas, and coal companies must pay substantial royalties to taxpayers for the right to extract those resources from public land, the hardrock-mining companies pay nothing for extrac-

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tion rights on their claims—not a dime. The companies argue that they cannot afford to pay royalties because of the costly nature of their operations. Yet somehow they can and do pay handsome royalties for the privilege of mining on private lands or state lands. The Newmont Mining Company, for instance, is paying a private landowner an 18 percent royalty for the right to extract gold from his land in Nevada. The land is within spitting distance of a Newmont gold mine located on federal property, on which the company pays no royalties. How much is this quirk of the law costing taxpayers? It's estimated that billions of dollars worth of minerals are extracted from federal lands each year; it's also estimated that the average royalty paid by mining companies to *private* landowners is about 5 percent. So extending that royalty to public lands could produce more than $100 million per year for taxpayers.

When I first heard about the 1872 Mining Law, I was incredulous. How could this be? Well, as my mother used to say, "Everybody's business is nobody's."

But the 1872 Law doesn't just allow companies to stake a claim and then mine public lands without paying royalties. It also gives them the option of *buying* that public land forever—at rock bottom prices. If the claimholder can prove to the Department of Interior that his claim contains commercially producible hardrock minerals, then the government must grant the applicant a deed or "patent" to the lands for the princely sum of between $2.50 to $5 per acre. According to the Mineral Policy Center, more than 3.2 million acres of public lands packing $243 billion worth of hardrock minerals have been patented since 1872. Yet once a claimant has been granted a patent, he is not required to mine the land he's bought. He can use it for any purpose. Patented claims have become sites for vacation home developments, junkyards, tourist traps, casinos, and golf courses.

Mining Our Pockets

Beginning in 1990, I attempted to include a provision in the Department of Interior appropriations bill to prohibit the processing of new patent applications. The mining industry narrowly defeated this proposal. I continued my efforts each year until 1994, when a House-Senate conference committee finally imposed the patent moratorium. Unfortunately, many of the most valuable claims were either already patented or were excluded by a grandfather clause.

For instance, just four days after the Senate voted 50 to 48 to defeat my patent moratorium amendment in 1990, the Stillwater Mining Company filed applications for patents on 2,000 acres of national forest land in Montana. For just $10,000 Stillwater will gain title to land containing platinum and palladium reserves worth more than $35 billion. Similarly, in 1989, an Oregon family patented 780 acres of land containing silica in the National Dunes Recreation Area for $1,950. Shortly after the patent was issued, the Department of Interior decided the land, which attracts more than 2 million visitors a year, should not be mined, and sought to buy back the land. The new owners offered to sell the land back—for $11 million.

Many of the hardrock miners that managed to slip in patent applications before the moratorium are foreign-owned companies. Take Barrick Resources, a Canadian corporation that touts itself as the most profitable mining company in the world. In 1994 Barrick obtained patents on more than 1,800 acres of public land in Nevada. In exchange for approximately $9,000, what did Barrick get? More than $10 billion worth of gold—one of the largest deposits in U.S. history. With that kind of steal it's no wonder Barrick has become the world's most profitable mining company.

As if the hard-rock miners weren't getting a sweet enough deal, they're also allowed to enjoy a special tax break. Here's how it works. Because mining companies must often pay a high premium to buy land that is rich in mineral deposits, the government allows them to recover that premium by taking a tax deduction on the value of the minerals they subsequently extract. This is not in itself unreasonable. After all, the land the mining companies purchase is an asset—and the more they extract from that land the more it depreciates in value, so it's only fair for their tax bill to reflect that. However, companies that mine public land not only do not pay a premium for the minerals in that land, they are able to purchase the land at the below-market, laughable rate of $2.50 per acre. Yet, incredibly, these companies are still allowed to take the tax deduction on the value of the minerals they extract. Talk about double-dipping! The cost to taxpayers: almost $100 million a year.

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It's hard to believe that at a time when the average citizen considers himself grossly and unfairly taxed, Congress would tolerate such an unconscionable giveaway of billions of dollars in minerals to the wealthiest corporations in the world and, through the tax deduction, literally pay them to take the minerals. To paraphrase an old song, the mining companies get the gold and the taxpayers get the shaft.

But these excesses are just the tip of the iceberg. As I mentioned earlier, the taxpayers are often left to pick up the tab for cleaning up the mess—acid waste, polluted streams, and unreclaimed open pits—that mining companies leave in their wake. The Mineral Policy Center estimates it will cost upwards of $71.5 billion to reclaim the more than 557,000 abandoned hardrock-mining sites in the United States. More than 50 of these sites are already on the Superfund National Priority List. Industry apologists argue that reclamation and other environmental problems associated with hardrock mining are a thing of the past. They should tell that to the people of Rio Grande County in Colorado. In 1986, Summitville, another Canadian mining company, opened a gold mine in Rio Grande County. In June of that year, a pad and protective

The Anti-Reformers

Last September Sen. Dale Bumpers made yet another attempt to reform the Mining Law of 1872, introducing an amendment to the Interior Appropriations Bill. However, opponents of reform moved to dismiss Bumpers' amendment on the grounds that it was "out of order." Bumpers and his fellow reformers lost. Here are the senators who thwarted their efforts:

THOSE IN FAVOR OF DISMISSAL (I.E. AGAINST MINING REFORM): 59

Spencer Abraham (R-MI)
Wayne Allard (R-CO)
John Ashcroft (R-MO)
Max Baucus (D-MT)
Robert Bennett (R-UT)
Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)
Christopher S. Bond (R-MO)
John B. Breaux (D-LA)
Sam Brownback (R-KS)
Richard H. Bryan (D-NV)
Conrad Burns (R-MT)
Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO)
John H. Chafee (R-RI)
Thad Cochran (R-MS)
Paul Coverdell (R-GA)
Larry E. Craig (R-ID)
Alphonse M. D'Amato (R-NY)
Thomas A. Daschle (D-SD)
Pete V. Domenici (R-NM)
Byron L. Dorgan, (D-ND)
Michael B. Enzi (R-WY)
Bill Frist (R-TN)
Slade Gorton (R-WA)
Phil Gramm (R-TX)
Rod Grams (R-MN)
Charles E. Grassley (R-IA)
Chuck Hagel (R-NE)
Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT)
Jesse Helms (R-NC)
Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC)
Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX)
Tim Hutchinson (R-AR)
James Inhofe (R-OK)
Daniel K. Inouye (D-HI)
Tim Johnson (D-SD)
Dirk Kempthorne (R-ID)
Jon Kyl (R-AZ)
Trent Lott (R-MS)
Richard G. Lugar (R-IN)
Connie Mack (R-FL)
John McCain (R-AZ)
Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD)
Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
Frank H. Murkowski (R-AK)
Don Nickles (R-OK)
Harry Reid (D-NV)
Pat Roberts (R-KS)
William V. Roth (R-DE)
Rick Santorum (R-PA)
Jeff Sessions (R-AL)
Richard Shelby (R-AL)
Robert C. Smith (R-NH)
Gordon Smith (R-OR)
Arlen Specter (R-PA)
Ted Stevens (R-AK)
Craig Thomas (R-WY)
Fred Thompson (R-TN)
Strom Thurmond (R-SC)
John Warner (R-VA)

NOT VOTING: 2

Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI)
Paul Wellstone (D-MN)

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liner at the site failed, allowing cyanide to seep into the ground. Summitville's parent company subsequently declared bankruptcy, leaving only a $4.7 million bond for reclamation. The EPA had to hire 55 full-time workers, and taxpayers are, at this moment, spending $33,000 per day to prevent cyanide from spilling into the headwaters of the Rio Grande. Before the clean-up is complete, taxpayer costs are predicted to reach up to $60 million.

Rather than working to develop updated environmental standards to prevent future disasters, the mining industry continues to fight efforts to improve environmental regulations. They argue that tougher standards would increase their costs of doing business. When the Interior Department recently announced its intention to update the regulations regarding mining on public land, the industry attacked, tapping its allies in the Senate to include a provision in the Department of Interior appropriations bill that would prevent the department from even working on new regulations unless all the governors of the Western states signed off on them. Fat chance! Only after the White House threatened a veto did senators from the West agree to allow the department to proceed with preparation of the regulations.

It's called a "freebie," a bad vote that has no political repercussions and that the lawmaker can cash in when he's gathering support for his own provincial interests.

Mining Their Own Business

My eight-year battle to reform the hardrock-mining laws of this country has been a lonely one. But it should be noted that my chief co-sponsor, Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) has been a staunch ally. Reps. Nick Joe Rahall (D-WV) and George Miller (D-CA) have also fought valiantly for reform in the House. However, their efforts have also been stymied. The problem: The mining interests have spent millions upon millions to keep this sacred law in force. In 1993, the House actually passed a comprehensive reform bill by a nearly 3-to-1 margin. But, the measure stalled in a House-Senate conference as senators from the West threatened to filibuster any bill that would establish a royalty similar to the kind mining companies pay private landowners. Archaic Senate rules allow a small minority to block legislation and Western-state senators have used them to thwart efforts to reform the 1872 Mining Law time and again.

It is certainly understandable that legislators from states in which the mining industry is a major force would be supportive of that industry. However, a large number of senators, most of whom have no mining in their states, continue to vote with the Western bloc. While the desire for campaign contributions from mining interests is certainly one explanation for many legislators' unwillingness to reform the Mining Law, it is not the only one. The sad fact is that many members of Congress are happy to support other members' parochial interest if they feel comfortably certain that the voters back home won't know or care about the issue. It's called a "freebie," a bad vote that has no political repercussions and which the lawmaker can cash in when he's gathering support for his own interests. It's only natural that each member feels a duty to protect their provincial interests back home. But when those interests fly in the face of the obvious national interest, it becomes the duty of the other members to tolerate it no longer. Unfortunately, such has not been the case with this unseemly law.

When speaking to their local chambers of commerce and Rotary Clubs, members of Congress often promise to guard taxpayers' money as if it were their own. But how many landowners would sell their gold- or silver-laden lands for $2.50 per acre and not even demand a royalty? It is long past time to start treating the taxpayers with respect rather than contempt. It is time to chisel the 1872 Mining Law out of the U.S. Code and send it to the Smithsonian Museum where it belongs.

It seems incomprehensible that Congress would allow this abuse of taxpayers to continue. When I first heard about the 1872 Mining Law, I was incredulous. How could this be? Well, as my mother used to say, "Everybody's business is nobody's business." And the unpleasant truth is that it is much more important to the mining industry and members of Congress from mining states to maintain the status quo than it is for the public, largely unaware that it is being used and abused, to demand and achieve change. ●

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It's the Exam That Fails

How the INS citizenship test misses the point

BY NURITH C. AIZENMAN

AS A YOUNG MAN IN ETHIOPIA, BINYAM Tamene was not exactly the silent type. "I thought the world was free, and I was saying things openly," he remembers. The Communists then in power weren't quite so progressive. They arrested Tamene and imprisoned him along with many of his friends. A good number of them were killed, but Tamene survived and found refuge in the United States. So when the INS officer administering Tamene's naturalization exam asked him what the benefits of U.S. citizenship were, lofty thoughts of freedom and democracy came rushing to mind. But Tamene had been forewarned that as far as the local INS office was concerned, that's not what American citizenship is about. So he bit his tongue and gave the answer he'd memorized from the INS' study materials: "Being a U.S. citizen will get me a U.S. passport, make me eligible for federal jobs, and allow me to bring over relatives." He aced the test.

Tamene's answer may have made a mockery of his emotional decision to renounce his homeland and seek full membership in our society, but his instinct to play it safe was a wise one. According to U.S. law the INS must ensure that citizenship applicants demonstrate "a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history, and of the principles and form of government, of the United States." However, INS headquarters in Washington allows its officials in the field tremendous discretion in assessing those qualifications. It is up to each individual examiner to decide what and how many questions to ask at a candidate's interview, how many questions the candidate must get right to pass the test—and what constitutes a right or wrong answer.

As a result, the citizenship exam can often be either unconscionably hard, or laughably easy. Immigrants who land an unforgiving examiner are simply out of luck. "I know of people who were asked difficult things like, 'What's the 13th amendment' or, 'What's the 26th amendment,'" says Mary Ellen Ros of the New York Association for New Americans. One INS examiner in Baltimore was notorious for asking the question, "What was the last federal holiday?" Immigrants who failed to provide the correct answer—Martin Luther King day—automatically failed the entire test. Perhaps the most harrowing incidents are those uncovered by Juan Jose Guttierez of One Stop Immigration in Los Angeles: "I've documented cases where INS agents have asked such questions as, 'What's the name of Gov. Pete Wilson's wife?' 'What's his birth date?' or 'Who were the commanding generals at the Battle of Gettysburg?'" Civil War buffs might protest that the answer to the latter question is a vitally important historical fact. But even they must concede that denying citizenship to someone just because he doesn't know it is a wee bit draconian.

Of course, the system's arbitrariness often works in applicants' favor. "Many examiners make the test easier or more difficult based on who they're interviewing," explains Ros. Thus while the occasional well-educated immigrant has been quizzed on such esoterica as, "At what stage in the writing of the Constitution did the idea for a bill of rights first come into play?" less sophisticated applicants are often let off with brain teasers like, "What are the colors of the American flag?" and, "Who is the current president?" Sympathetic interviewers also often coach immigrants who give a wrong answer on their first try. For example, says Ros, "there have been situations where the INS officer says, 'Can you name three states?' and the person names two states and a city, so the examiner says, 'Can you name another state?'" Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the vast majority of immigrants pass the history and government test. Though the INS does not have firm statistics, it's estimated that only 10 to 20 percent fail.

This has led right-wing critics like Georgie Anne Geyer to charge that the INS is opening our national gates to a flood of barbarians whose failure to assimilate will end up balkanizing the nation. Immigrant

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advocates counter that the current system can still be too *tough* on immigrants. But both sides are ignoring the real problem. Regardless of whether they are too hard too easy, almost none of the questions asked in the citizenship exam touch on what immigrants really need to know in order to become responsible participants in our democracy. What does it matter, for instance, whether an applicant has been able to memorize that the length of a senator's term is six years if the applicant doesn't understand why senators must periodically come up for reelection in the first place?

Since the time of the founding fathers the whole point of allowing, and indeed encouraging, foreign-born residents to naturalize has been to ensure that these newcomers will help sustain—and not undermine—our democratic system of government. So why does the INS citizenship exam test for knowledge that is so irrelevant to this goal?

PHOTO COURTESY OF INS

Test Time: An immigrant faces his INS examiner

The trouble is that no one at INS headquarters ever sat down and developed the citizenship test in a thoughtful and comprehensive way. That's because for years the INS has been extremely decentralized. Until recently the agency's regional commissioners were actually political appointees—many of whom openly questioned the authority of the national commissioner in Washington. So it's no wonder that after Congress introduced the civics and history portion of the citizenship test, INS headquarters simply issued a two-volume textbook on the subject and left it up to its 33 district offices to figure out how to check that applicants had mastered the material within.

By the early 1990s a number of critics were grumbling that the citizenship exam was completely arbitrary—varying widely from both district to district and individual examiner to examiner. So the directors of many district offices began casting about for a way to make their tests more standardized. That's when they hit upon the list of 100 questions. The list had been developed in the late 1980s by two INS agents to provide some guidance to private companies developing a history and civics course that illegal immigrants were allowed to take in order to become legal under a special amnesty law then in effect. (The illegals also had the option of taking an INS administered test based on the list.) Although the 100 questions on the list were derived from the material in the INS' history and civics textbooks, they had never been intended to serve as an appropriate measure of an applicant's qualifications for citizenship. But in the absence of anything better, many INS district directors instructed their examiners to choose their questions off of the list of 100. Duke University immigration specialist Noah Pickus points out the absurdity of this: "The citizenship test is largely shaped by material developed for illegal immigrants by two INS folks practically over the course of a weekend."

This helps explain some of the quirkier questions that often get asked as part of the citizenship test. For instance, according to David Rosenberg, Director of Program Initiatives at the INS, the question "What is the 49th state of the Union?" was included on the list of 100 not because anyone thought this was crucial information that every would-be citizen should know, but because "this fact was in the last few pages of the INS textbook [that illegal aliens taking the special course would be using]—so it's just an old teacher's trick to make sure they go through the whole book."

Another problem with basing the citizenship exam on the list of 100 is that since the list was never designed for that purpose, not all of the answers on it are accurate. "One of my attorneys was at an INS interview with a client at which the examiner asked, 'How many amendments are there to the constitution?'" recalls Mary Ellen Ros. "Our client answered 27—which was correct. However since that last amendment had been passed fairly recently, all of the INS materials say there are 26. So the examiner marked our client wrong, and when our attorney tried to correct him the examiner got furious."

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Finally, while the widespread adoption of the 100 questions may have made the test a little more predictable within many district offices, across districts there is still tremendous variation in terms of the number of questions an applicant is asked and the number he must answer correctly in order to pass.

To their credit, the district directors who adopted the 100 questions were at least taking a stab at introducing some consistency into the system. And that's more than could have been said for INS headquarters. However, there is some hope on the horizon. At her confirmation hearings current INS Commissioner Doris Meissner indicated that she was deeply disturbed by the chaotic and irrelevant nature of the naturalization process, and she is clearly committed to reforming it.

Unfortunately, Meissner's early efforts were overtaken by more pressing concerns. Around the time she took office, the number of applicants for U.S. citizenship jumped from several hundred thousand per year to over a million—forcing the INS to scramble to process both the new influx and the rapidly accumulating backlog of applications. In its haste, the INS failed to conduct adequate criminal background checks on 180,000 immigrants to whom it had granted citizenship—prompting a public outcry, congressional investigations, a proposal to scrap the INS (currently being considered by the White House), and a Justice Department-mandated rehaul that is now in progress.

The good news is that as part of that rehaul the INS is looking to completely redesign the citizenship exam by the end of next year. To begin with the test will be standardized across all districts. In addition it seems likely that rather than having individual officers administer it orally, the test will be given in a written form similar to that of a number of standardized citizenship tests already developed by several testing companies. The question of what is on the test will also be revisited. Many academics and immigration advocates are already piping up with their suggestions. A recent conference on the subject hosted by Noah Pickus at Duke generated a myriad of recommended questions ranging from, "Name one difference between the Republican and Democratic parties" to, "What did President Kennedy mean when he said, 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country'?"

This seems the ideal opportunity to have a thoughtful public discussion about what we think even the most poorly educated new citizens should know about our nation and our democracy—and by extension what we feel citizenship really means. Unfortunately, the public is almost totally unaware of the big changes to the citizenship exam now underway at INS. As for INS officials, they appear leery of opening up the issue to a wide-ranging debate, fearing that this may bog down an already slow-moving process. Instead, says David Rosenberg, the INS is leaning toward using the history and civics standards set for high school students by the recent Goals 2000 initiative as its guide. Ironically, all too many American kids may fall short of those standards. A recent Department of Education study of student achievement in American history found that 57 percent of U.S. high school seniors had failed to attain even the "basic" level of achievement. Which raises a question that those who advocate against naturalizing more foreigners may want to focus on instead: Just how well are we preparing native-born Americans for citizenship? ●

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Mama, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Regulators

But if they do—10 survival tips

BY BLAIR LEVIN

DURING MY FOUR YEARS AS CHIEF OF staff to Reed Hundt, the recently departed chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, the FCC was involved in a flurry of high-profile policy battles. From the first auctions of spectrum to the deregulation of both the global and domestic telephone markets to the Republican Congress' attempts to dismantle the commission altogether, the FCC found itself constantly under attack and on the attack. Along the way, the chairman's team learned a few lessons.

First, the basic physics of policy making. Every significant policy debate involves politically powerful private interests. Where those interests are consistent with good public policy—and they often are—the good policies easily prevail. Unfortunately, when private interests are contrary to good policy, the interests are still likely to win. As a general rule, powerful forces beat powerful ideas—unless an intervening actor takes up the cause. For public officials, this means that, if they want to make a difference, they have to arm themselves for battle. The fight does not have to be mean or unfair. But it's not a lovefest.

So how to do it? The rules of any business apply. Hire people smarter than you and give them incentives to play like a team, know more than anyone else about the forest *and* the trees, figure out the leverage points, have a plan but stay flexible, and whenever possible use humor. But above all, understand the nature of the fight. When I started at the FCC, I thought government officials had the luxury of simply deciding on the right policies and coherently explaining their decisions, much like judges. I was wrong. You can't make a difference by waiting for a policy matter to come before you and simply reacting. You have to create a climate in which the right policy has a chance to succeed. Typically, these battles have three phases: defining the issue, gathering support, and then orchestrating a resolution. What follows are 10 rules for aspiring government officials who—as unrealistic as it may seem—hope to guide their policy battles toward a Disney-style happily-ever-after ending.

1. You can't be good at politics if you are only about politics.

For most Americans, the term "politics" connotes achieving a goal through connections, not merit, and slick rhetoric, not analytic rigor. For us, politics meant creating enough support to adopt and sustain good public policy objectives.

But if you expect a policy battle to be waged on the merit of your ideas—not the speed of your spin—you had better thoroughly test your positions before advancing into the field. Even though these ideas eventually get boiled down into simple slogans, you must first think through, and be prepared to address, all the implications and ambiguities of a policy recommendation before you put it out there for public scrutiny. Which brings us to the invaluable Rule Number Two ...

2. Listen to your adversaries.

We discovered that one of the best ways to fine-tune our ideas was to test them on the folks most

BLAIR LEVIN *served as chief of staff to the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission from 1993-1997.*

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eager to uncover the flaws in our logic—our critics on the right. We read conservative criticism of communications policy and welcomed opportunities to speak at conservative think tanks. Of course, those on the right still disagreed with much of what we did. But when we went public with our positions, we had already vetted and strengthened the intellectual underpinnings of our arguments.

Even more important, where conservatives' criticism made sense, we willingly adopted their best ideas. This led us to embrace auctions (using the market rather than the government to allocate spectrum) and spectrum flexibility (giving licensees more freedom in deciding how to use their spectrum), and to reject government standard-setting (particularly since such standard-setting resulted in limiting competition). None of these positions made us particularly popular with our more traditional liberal allies. But embracing the best ideas of our harshest critics gave us credibility as a team interested in good policy, not easy politics.

Reaching out to the opposition also provides you with ammunition for the upcoming battle. Every ideology carries inherent contradictions. Listening to and communicating with your opponent helps you identify the contradictions within his or her position, and then focus the debate on the issues that highlight those contradictions. During most of my time at the commission, the Republicans controlled not just the Congress but the majority of the FCC. And on practically every issue, they sought to frame the debate as regulation vs. deregulation. To counter that simplistic notion, we had to lay open the tensions in the GOP rhetoric. For instance, Republicans proclaim pro-family values. But issues like educational television and the v-chip put conservatives' family-values agenda in direct conflict with their anti-regulatory position. Likewise, the GOP advocates devolution. But in communications, devolution inherently leads to more regulation, since regulation in 11,000 different local jurisdictions is always a greater regulatory burden than even the toughest single federal regulation.

The point of highlighting such contradictions is not to take one side or the other. After all, one needs to serve both family values and market values, and local governments have an important role in protecting local interests in communications. Nor is the point to bash the opposition. Rather, the goal is to define an issue in a way that advances the debate beyond the bumpersticker slogans, forces the other side to examine its own contradictions, and gives you a chance to gain support from groups that are not your natural allies. It also reminds the press of the variety of issues on the table and limits the ability of parties to take contradictory positions down the road.

3. May the power of the creator be with you.

Film-industry powerhouse George Lucas once told us, "The only power I have is the power of the creator." When the 1994 election gave the Republicans control of Congress, these words became our inspiration. We had to rely, not on friendly committee majorities in Congress, but on our ability to create, define, and advance our own agenda. So we kept raising idea after idea that we felt was important; networking classrooms, free TV time for candidates, spectrum flexibility, downsizing parts of the commission, and so on. We didn't always succeed. Sometimes we couldn't generate enough support. Sometimes it turned out that we simply had bad ideas. But by actively creating, we always kept the debate on our terms.

4. Fight air wars in Arabia; not land wars in Asia.

Government has limited abilities and resources. It can be effective at defining and hitting clear targets. It is not good at fighting skirmishes about details that will forever remain hidden from public view. For example, in the battle over kids' television, there were two major issues: how to define what is educational and how much educational programming broadcasters should be obligated to provide. The first issue would have involved the commission in hundreds of individual decisions. So although we strengthened an existing definition of "educational," we decided simply to make information as to which programs the networks deemed "educational" accessible to the public, and allow parents to monitor the quality themselves. We focused our energies on the more easily measurable issue of quantity.

This rule also means foregoing battles where the process pain is too great. We could have litigated every cable rate complaint we received to the penny. But it would have taken about 10,000 lawyers—a wee bit more than our 2,000 person agency could afford. And even then, it might not have gotten the public any more than we ultimately achieved with broader settlements.

5. Only 75 people count. Make sure it's the right 75.

In the early stages of the debate, only a limited number of people have influence. As such, generating support requires making sure that the right voic-

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es are heard. Upon arriving at the commission, we were told that only 75 people counted—and they all hated our agenda. So we began working to make sure that more non-traditional voices (those friendlier to our agenda, of course) had influence. We invited conservative taxpayers' groups to monitor debates about auctions and education groups to follow efforts to bring telecommunications services to classrooms. We particularly courted corporate CEOs whose private interests were congruent with the public interest. Equipment manufacturers and computer companies, for example, generally like competition in communications because competition means cheaper service costs and more equipment and software sales. These voices didn't cancel out those that opposed our ideas, but we did our best to give them extra volume in order to broaden the debate.

We also sought to make the leading editorial writers part of the 75. Whether one agrees with their views or not, they are the best institution in America for articulating a rationale for a policy. Indeed, making sure that all journalists sympathetic to our ideas got the information needed to report on these issues was vital to our efforts, helping articulate our message to the public.

6. Never go into battle without borrowing someone else's army.

The last stages of the debate require legions of operatives, press people, researchers, and other troops. Government agencies don't have such armies. So when preparing for a battle, make sure you can borrow someone else's troops.

When Congress told the FCC to distribute a huge swatch of spectrum as part of the digital television proceeding, we figured that broadcasters, since they wouldn't have to pay for it, would naturally grab for more than they needed. So we needed someone to stake a competing claim for the extraneous spectrum. Someone jokingly suggested that confronting the broadcast industry would require guys with guns, so we promptly invited the police to consider whether they had spectrum needs. They did, and the result was an allocation of the best spectrum ever made available to the public safety community, spectrum police say will save an untold number of lives. What's more, by raising the issue that there might be other uses for the spectrum, we got people thinking about how much spectrum the broadcasters really needed. This led to technical analyses on the matter, and a decision to keep a significant chunk of spectrum out of the broadcasters' grant and auction it off for billions of dollars—none of which would have been possible without the armies of the cops.

Trying to borrow an army is also a good reality check. If you can't get anyone else to care, you shouldn't either. The role of lone-voice-in-the-wilderness is important, but let someone else play it.

7. You cannot beat more powerful forces without lots of sunshine.

The authors of the First Amendment were right: Decisions made in full view, after public debate, are going to be considerably better than those made behind closed doors. And, whatever its shortcomings, the press remains the best vehicle for exposing the flaws or policy inconsistencies of both the private and the public sectors. For example, broadcasters pressed the FCC for a rapid grant of digital television licenses, then became reluctant to commit to "build out," or make use of their new spectrum. Four months of commission staff's privately pointing out the broadcasters' inconsistencies produced little more than an industry statement that engineering and technical problems required at least a six-year build out. But then front-page stories about the broadcasters' foot-dragging appeared in *The New York Times* and *Wall St. Journal.* Two days later, the broadcasters approached the FCC with a far more aggressive schedule. It's amazing how a little sunshine can improve one's engineering.

To be sure, battles in the press are unpredictable, often reducing complicated algebra to first-grade math. But if you can't figure out a way to win in the public arena, you can't win.

8. When confronted with a person pointing a gun at you, negotiate with the person, not the gun.

When it finally comes to resolving an issue, it's important to understand who has the power to make a deal. This requires unpeeling the onion until you find someone who can say yes. At the FCC the power theoretically resides with the commissioners. But where a commissioner does precisely what a particular industry advocates, it makes no sense to negotiate with the commissioner. That's why, for example, we often negotiated directly with broadcasters. Once we reached an agreement with them on educational television and the details of digital television, the debates at the commission disappeared.

9. Don't take it personally and don't get personal.

The personal politics of regulation are awful. When you vote with someone, they think it's because

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they are righteous; when you vote against them, they say it's because you bear a personal grudge or you're involved in some political deal. Whether these sentiments are sincere or are merely tactics to prey on insecure commissioners, I know not. Nor does it matter. Whatever the motive, criticism is more prevalent than compliments. This dynamic leads some regulators to seek the refuge of the politics of friendship. If one worries about popularity, the easy path is to stick with your friends. This is one reason why, over time, officials become more supportive of friendly industries than of ideas.

But even when you are personally attacked, it never makes sense to return the fire in kind. It completely changes the debate because the media will stop discussing the policy issues and instead focus on the cheap, but fun, personal battle. This makes it tougher to reach that final scene in which everyone can hold his or her head up high. And this last scene is important, because if you win at too great a cost to your opponent, it will end up costing you later on.

Remember also that today's enemy is tomorrow's ally. Cable, which hated us on rate regulation, was a big supporter on phone competition issues. Broadcasters, who didn't like us on public interest issues, are the essential army on breaking video bottlenecks. And local phone companies, who fought tooth and nail to stop us from opening up their markets, played a crucial role in the battles to open foreign markets. Personal attacks retard the process necessary to play together when the time is right

10. To enter the gates of heaven, you must be willing to enter the gates of hell.

Policy battles are not for the faint of heart. If you do not make it clear that you're willing to fight to the finish, no matter what the personal cost, you will undercut your chances of success.

In this regard, we were lucky. After the agency cut cable rates, the chairman's office received a firestorm of criticism. But we held firm, and subsequently no one ever doubted our resolve. This made it easier to stop the anti-competitive merger negotiations between AT&T and Southwestern Bell and to negotiate market-opening conditions in approving the Bell Atlantic/NYNEX merger.

A final word of warning: Even if you follow these rules, there's no guarantee you'll emerge victorious. Working in the government can be frustrating. But it is an honorable calling that brings to mind the lyrics of country singer Willie Nelson: "Mama, don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys/Don't let 'em play guitars and drive them old trucks/make 'em be doctors and lawyers and such." I recognize that, for the sake of stability, there is wisdom in taking those words literally. But how much fun would life be without some time spent playing guitars and driving old trucks? So it was with my time at the commission. And now, although my head hopes that my children never have to go through some of the attacks and disappointments we faced, my heart hopes they will someday know the joy of fighting the good fight. ●

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Who's Who

BY SUSAN THREADGILL

Of the 74 new Republican congressmen elected in 1994 on conservative platforms that emphasized family values, six have since had their marriages end in divorce. **Rick White**, for example, having campaigned with what *The Wall Street Journal* described as a "moving TV spot [that] showed him reading to his son **Richard**, then five years old, as the little boy sat on his lap," left his family behind in Bainbridge Island, Washington, when he came to Capitol Hill and has subsequently initiated divorce proceedings against his wife, **Vikki**, who wanted to preserve the marriage.

Dick Morris has a convincing explanation of why **Bill Clinton** will go all out to help **Al Gore** succeed him: "Clinton sees Gore's election as a vindication of his presidency."

Speaking of **Morris**, in a recent column in *The Hill*, he complained about the lack of creativity in the White House staff: "Only **Sydney Blumenthal** and **Bruce Reed** are true idea people on the current staff. But Bruce is not aggressive by temperament and Sydney is too inexperienced politically to be good at turning the battleship around."

If you thought **Fred Thompson**'s hearing on campaign finance abuses were a bit hard on **Bill Clinton** and **Al Gore**, **Trent Lott** does not agree. He is said to have been incensed by Senator Thompson's efforts to be even-handed, such as putting **Haley Barbour** in the witness chair. Just as we were going to press, NBC's **Lisa Myers** asked Thompson about his relationship with Lott. When was the last time they talked? "It's been several months."

Can anyone confirm **Paula Jones**' testimony about **Bill Clinton**'s distinguishing characteristic? **Frank Murray** of *The Washington Times* says that **Dolly Kyle Browning** has "intimated" to him that she could do so if asked during a deposition. How would Ms. Browning know? She grew up with Clinton in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and tells Murray "At first, I was 11 and he was 13. Even in Arkansas, 11 is a little young for sex. As we got older, we got more physically interested and more involved. It pretty well ran the gamut of everything a relationship can be."

Reporter **Murray**, who obviously shares our keen interest in public affairs, also recently looked up **Donna Rice**, the blonde who brought down **Gary Hart**. She is now Donna Rice Hughes and works for an anti-pornography lobby called Enough Is Enough. Murray tried to track down Rice's former friend, **Lynn Armandt**, the proprieter of the Too Hot Miami bikini boutique who sold the *National Enquirer* the famous photographs of Rice sitting on Gary Hart's lap during a cruise on a yacht called the **Monkey Business**, but found that she no longer has a listed phone. The man who provided the boat, **William Broadhurst,** subsequently campaigned for former Gov. **Edwin Edwards** of Louisiana, who was recently in the news as the recipient of nearly 400,000 hard-to-explain dollars from San Francisco Forty-Niners owner **Eddie DeBartolo Jr.** Broadhurst was recently acquitted of federal mail fraud and conspiracy charges.

In the December "Who's Who" we questioned whether **Dick Gephardt**'s standing with House Democrats was really as good as his fast-track victory indicated. Further doubts have been raised by the reaction to his Harvard speech attacking **Clinton** and **Gore**. Among his fellow House Democrats who criticized the speech were **Harold Ford Jr.**, **Timothy Roemer**, **James Moran Jr.**, **Jim Davis**, and **Calvin Dooley**.

Although **Rupert Murdoch** became a U.S. citizen in the mid-1980s, he does not pay taxes at the rate the rest of us are accustomed to. In its most recent fiscal year, according to *The Washington Post's* **Paul Farhi**, Murdoch's *News Corp.* "reported paying $103 million in worldwide taxes on operating income of

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$1.32 billion, an effective rate of 7.8 percent." We can't help being curious about what our friends at the Murdoch-owned *Weekly Standard*, the *New York Post* and the Fox News Channel will have to say about this.

Newt Gingrich took a trip to London in December. Did he use his own American Express card? Of course not. According to **Donna Cassata** of *Congressional Quarterly*, the trip was paid for by Atlantic-Richfield.

If **Al Gore** wins in 2000, Washington's leading lobbyists are likely to be his friends **Peter Knight** (see December "Who's Who") and **Tom Downey**. Downey already has an impressive list of clients that includes Fuji films, MetLife, DuPont, and Time Warner. By the way, one of the Knight clients featured in our December item, Molten Metal Technology, has, despite the $30 million in federal contracts that Knight helped it get, just sought Chapter 11 protection in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Boston.

When White House chefs fall out, what do they say about one another? Now we know, thanks to **Paul Bedard** of *The Washington Times*, who has looked into the dispute between White House pastry chefs **Roland Mesnier** and **Franette McCulloch** on one side and assistant chef **Sean T. Haddon** who had been a favorite of the **George Bush's** but was fired by the **Clinton** White House in 1994. Here's what court records reveal the pastry chefs had to say about Haddon's skills: He "couldn't make a crab cake, once served the Bushes an orange Jell-O pie," and "could not make mashed potatoes without an instant mix."

An employee of the Railroad Retirement Board recently was accused, according to *The Washington Post's* **Al Kamen**, of "submitting bogus travel vouchers, misusing frequent flyer miles, chalking up about $10,000 in personal calls, and failing when he retired in 1994, to return government-purchased equipment—namely five handguns and 5,000 rounds of ammunition." The accused was not just any old employee, he was **William J. Doyle III**, the agency's inspector general, the fellow who is supposed to keep the rest of the agency on the straight and narrow. Doyle, while not admitting guilt, paid the government $35,000 to settle the charges.

Is **Madeleine Albright** another **Bill Clinton**? We refer to the president's preference for Hollywood stars like **Sharon Stone** as dinner companions. Just recently, Albright has taken **Patrick Stewart** to a White House dinner, and attended what *The Washington Post* describes as "an intimate dinner for **Anthony Hopkins**."

Charles Rangel recently observed that **Bill Clinton** does not have a "buddy" in Congress. Another veteran congressman recently made a similar point to us: "The president needs someone he can trust to tell him what feelings are on the Hill, someone other congressmen know he trusts. Someone they can rely on to accurately relay the president's views to them and their views to the White House."

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Amazing Grace

Can churches save the inner city?

By Robert Worth

Bart Campolo is not your typical Christian evangelist. In his buzz cut and combat boots, he looks more like Vanilla Ice than one of those well-dressed people who knock on suburban doors and offer to tell you The Good News. When you ask him why he's dedicated his life to the struggling churches of north Philadelphia, he doesn't mention God at all. Instead, he tells you that one in four young African-American males in this country is under some form of correctional supervision—jail, probation, or parole. He also tells you what he has seen in recent years: a new baby boomlet of disaffected ghetto youth, raised in the era of crack cocaine and absent fathers, that is learning to play Mortal Kombat with real guns. Although he fiercely opposed the 1996 welfare cuts, Campolo will readily grant that government programs can't reach these kids. "What they really need is one adult who's willing to be a mentor—talk to them, show them the ropes," he says. That's where the church comes in. "Even if I didn't believe in God I would work in the inner-city church. It's the one hierarchical institution left in these communities."

Campolo, who has received a $1 million grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to help Philadelphia churches develop youth programs, is part of an emerging movement to reach at-risk youth through inner-city congregations. The movement is rooted in battered, cash-strapped churches like north Philadelphia's Feltonville Presbyterian, where one of Campolo's fellow youthworkers drove me one Friday night last spring. As we walked up the orange-carpeted aisle, the dimly-lit wooden church throbbed with electric bass and drums. By the altar, under an electric-lit crucifix, a group of black and Hispanic children and teenagers clustered excitedly around a grand piano, while others stood in their pews talking and laughing. One of the girls, no more than 16, held a baby in her arms. The two supervisors, Tom and Gladys, clearly had their hands full. But after calling attention for a brief prayer, Tom managed to get the entire group to sing a song called "There is Hope":

> In a world of broken promises,
> Where the faithful are chosen and few,
> Where men of valor are vanishing,
> What can you do?
>
> When commitments are crumbling around us
> And lives shared for years fall apart,
> Do we have any hope of completion
> The race that we start?

The words may sound sad, but the truth is that there is hope for kids like these—or so thinks an unlikely coalition of politicians, academics, philanthropists, and writers who favor "faith-based" antipoverty work. Conservative think tanks like the Heritage Foundation have long touted religion as the answer to poverty, but the recent crusade is more diverse. Last spring the billionaire investor and conservative activist Foster Friess toured churches and clinics in several cities with a retinue of Republican congressmen, soaking up inspirational stories and handing out checks. Meanwhile, a variety of liberal foundations were getting involved—Pew, Ford, Lilly, and others. The media have begun to get religion too. Jon Meacham wrote about the black church's crime-fighting potential in *The Washington Monthly* back in 1993, and in the past year the potential of inner-city religious institutions to help the poor in this and other ways has inspired a number of newspaper columns and a long *New Yorker* piece by Joe Klein. "When we started out this was considered a conservative issue," says John DiIulio, the Princeton political scientist who has helped the movement gain academic and political legitimacy. "But all of a sudden

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everyone wanted a piece of it." DiIulio, who made his reputation as a "get tough" crime analyst, quit his prestigious post at Brookings and cut back his Princeton teaching schedule last year to found the Partnership for Research on Religion and At-Risk Youth. He's also helping a national coalition of black ministers with a plan to mobilize 1,000 churches in the nation's 25 largest cities over the next decade.

A "Jihad" in Boston

What kind of evidence would make a respected political scientist start stumping for inner-city churches? According to surveys conducted by Harvard economist Richard Freeman, children who become involved in church activities are far more likely than other kids from the same backgrounds and neighborhoods to escape poverty, crime, drug abuse, and joblessness. When Freeman's study was first published in 1985, the research community was skeptical. But since then an impressive stack of surveys has pointed to the same conclusion about religious faith and inner-city residents. To cite just one example: Dr. David Larson, a research psychiatrist at the National Institute of Mental Health, found that religious involvement keeps poor people out of drug abuse, alcoholism, quitting school, and other kinds of behavior that tend to reinforce poverty.

But the most impressive proof of urban ministry's power to transform a community comes from ministers like Rev. Eugene Rivers of Boston's Azusa Christian Community. Rivers helped organize the Ten Point Coalition (an alliance of inner-city churches) in the late 1980s, and he calls their collective struggle against poverty and crime an act of spiritual warfare, or "jihad." Converted from a street gang to Christianity at the age of 15, Rivers wandered in the desert for over a decade, unsure how to reconcile his faith with the legacy of the civil rights era. He ended up at Harvard in 1980 with "a terminal case of survivor's guilt. ... I couldn't stop thinking about my brothers dying in the hood." In 1984 Rivers and a band of fellow activists moved across the river to Dorchester to compete with pimps and drug dealers for the souls of the inner-city poor. They worked hard, but seemed to be losing ground in 1992 when the funeral of a drive-by shooting victim was interrupted by gangsters who sprayed the Morning Star Baptist Church with bullets and stabbed a young man in front of the entire congregation.

The lesson Rivers drew from that disaster became a tenet of the new activism: Government needs to collaborate with churches if either one is to be truly effective. Rivers and other ministers began to work with local probation officers, and eventually with Boston's Police Commissioner, Paul Evans. The cops were wary at first, but before long they found that Rivers and his fellow ministers were a tremendous asset in anti-gang policing and juvenile probation monitoring. Rivers' church, the Azusa Christian Community, now has a semi-formal presence at the Dorchester Court, helping out with young offenders and finding alternatives to incarceration. The success of the collaboration has become a legend: Boston has not had a single gun-related homicide since July 1995, and Paul Evans is quick to claim that part of the credit has to go to Rivers and his fellow ministers.

But not all of the "faith-based" outreach work is done by churches. Independent drug-treatment and homeless shelter programs have expanded in inner cities in the past few years. The largest of these is Teen Challenge, a Christian drug-treatment program based in Texas. According to an independent evaluation, Teen Challenge has a 95 percent success rate with heroin addicts, and an 83 percent rate with alcoholics, as compared to some federal programs that report success rates in the single digits. Dr. Catherine Hess, the former director of New York City's first methadone program for drug addicts, calls Teen Challenge "probably the most effective rehabilitation program I have ever seen anywhere." David Kuo, a former staffer to William Bennett who is now trying to attract corporate and philanthropic support for churches, says, "We want to take some of the most successful faith-based programs and do for them what Ray Kroc did for the first McDonald's."

That's a tall order, given the difference between hamburgers and souls. While it's true that a number of studies suggest that faith-based programs are exceptionally effective, we still don't know what makes most of these programs tick, or how to replicate them.

The Philadelphia Story

Meanwhile, one religious institution has already replicated itself successfully throughout our inner cities, with extraordinary results: Catholic schools. Consider the Gesu School, in the all-black ghetto of north Philadelphia. At the corner of 17th and Girard, the school's high stone edifice, constructed by the Jesuits in 1873, is surrounded on every side by vacant lots and dilapidated row houses, homes to crack-dealers and prostitutes. Inside, there are crucifixes and pictures of Christ in almost every room. But there are just as many pictures of black heroes: Arthur Ashe, Teresa Parks, Martin Luther King, and even Elijah McCoy, an obscure but inventive black engineer. Gesu's 450 stu-

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dents are 99 percent black and 85 percent non-Catholic. Half of them come from households with incomes below the federal poverty level, and almost two-thirds are in single parent homes. Tuition at Gesu is $2,400 a year, less than half of what the Philadelphia school system spends per student. It is an elementary school; 95 percent of its graduates go on to graduate from high school, compared to 35 percent for the neighborhood. On standardized math and reading tests, Gesu's student scores rival those of affluent suburban private schools in the Philadelphia area.

The school's success is not just a matter of the notorious Jesuit discipline, though that is clearly in evidence. (Students wear uniforms, and you will not pass them in the halls without hearing a prompt "hello" or "excuse me.") Gesu has managed to blend structure with a curriculum that elicits confidence far more effectively than the cheap Afrocentrism that mars so many inner-city public-school classes. There is an emphasis on black history and role models, but it is not hostile or exclusive. Bill Harris, himself a Gesu graduate, coaches basketball and track and runs a peer counseling program called Imani ("faith" in Swahili). He spends much of his time helping children to work through their questions about race. "Some kids think doing well in school is 'white' behavior," he says. "We have to deal with that."

The religious element is clearly important; there are required religion classes every day. But they're "fairly ecumenical," says Father George Bur, the school's president. "There is no instruction in the sacraments or traditional Catholic doctrine." Parents, even those who are not religious at all, appreciate Gesu's emphasis on ethical behavior and the importance of "living for others," the Jesuit motto. "This is home," one parent confessed to me. Her first child started out at a local public school, but didn't stay long. "I've tried both systems and I don't want to go back."

Gesu's success is typical of Catholic schools in inner cities around the country. A 1997 study showed that urban minority students with the same observed characteristics (parents' education, parents' occupation, family structure, and reading materials at home) were 26 percent more likely to graduate from Catholic high school than those who went to public school. As statistics go, this is huge, and very significant for the kids: In today's labor market, those who finish high school earn at least 15 percent more than dropouts.

Catholic schools also tend to have an equalizing effect on students of diverse backgrounds, as public schools, alas, do not. For instance: Among public school students, 65 percent of those whose parents have a college degree take Algebra II, versus 43 percent of those whose parents lack one. In Catholic schools the percentage of students taking Algebra II is actually higher for students whose parents lack a college degree—65 percent. The figure is only 62 percent for those whose parents do have a college degree.

These numbers help to explain why low-income black parents are so eager to obtain publicly funded vouchers to send their kids to schools like Gesu. A 1997 survey by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies tells an amazing story about changing black attitudes towards school choice. The only subgroup in the entire U.S. population—of any race—in which a majority opposes vouchers is blacks over 50. This is the generation that grew up with the promise of public education as a universal right, and they are loath to give it up. But 86 percent of blacks age 26 to 35 support vouchers, and the numbers are rising fast (a 10 percent increase since the 1996 survey). Support for vouchers is higher among blacks than in any other segment of the population, including Christian conservatives.

That's why Evangelicals for Social Action, a left-wing religious coalition with strong minority representation, joined Republican Sen. Dan Coats in endorsing the Senate version of the Washington, D.C. school voucher bill in September. Like the existing voucher programs in Cleveland and Milwaukee, the D.C. bill was limited in scope and means-tested, so that only the poorest families in the areas with the worst public schools could benefit. These provisions helped to defuse the familiar liberal argument that vouchers could be hijacked by wealthier families to help subsidize their child's last years at Groton.

Up Against a Wall?

Many liberals still see vouchers as a frightening crack in the wall of separation between church and state, one that the Supreme Court ought to seal. But in fact, the court has been warming up to the notion that secular purposes can thrive in a sectarian setting. In *Agostini v. Felton* (1997), the court approved a program that used public-school teachers for remedial education in parochial schools. This is consistent with our national experience: Countless Americans have benefited from the GI Bill and Pell grants, which allowed them to get an education at the school of their choice, whether that was Harvard or Notre Dame. And it's consistent with the intent of the founding fathers. The Constitution's religion provision—the free exercise and establishment clause—has two possible meanings: One was to keep the Anglican church from being preferred over others, and the other was to

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ensure that religion generally would not receive preference. In other words, a religion or religion in general could not be singled out for help or harm.

What the Constitution forbids is a religious test in determining whether government help can be given to an institution. The test that makes sense for social programs is effectiveness. If an institution is effective in helping the poor, its religious orientation shouldn't matter. Do parochial schools achieve the government's educational purposes better than some of our worst public schools? If so, there's every reason to fund them until the public system improves. The same principle should apply to faith-based welfare services. Civil libertarians are up in arms about the "charitable choice" provision (section 104) of the 1996 welfare reform law. It allows religious groups to become direct providers of federally funded social services, including cash assistance as well as emergency services, job training, maternity homes, and health services. But as long as they meet the effectiveness test there's no reason not to make use of their services. Of course, since the states will actually hand out the money, and since in some states religious institutions are very powerful, there's always the possibility that the effectiveness test will be made too easy or biased in favor of certain groups. But in such cases the federal courts could put a stop to any abuse on the grounds that religion (or a religion) is being favored.

Charitable choice also allows states to issue vouchers, which welfare recipients could redeem at faith-based facilities if they so chose. That would eliminate the danger of church competition for state contracts (which some religious leaders have cited as a reason to oppose charitable choice). Vouchers might breed their own form of competition, but some ministers think that's a good thing. "Competition could force faith-based groups to become more serious and more intense about properly representing and properly developing their programs in ways that do what they're supposed to do," says Harold Dean Trulear, dean of the New York Theological Seminary.

Make no mistake: Faith-based facilities cannot pick up all the slack, especially if welfare caseloads begin to rise again. Nor will they replace our public schools. But churches and their affiliates have already contributed to the recent decreases in crime and welfare dependency, and there's no reason our government shouldn't make better use of them. "What is clear on the ground, under the radar screen, is that there's a whole generation of young people whose lives have to be saved," says Eugene Rivers. "So it's really not about religion. It's about what kinds of mechanisms can allow our children to survive. If faith-based institutions can reduce crime, bring back some respect for the rule of law, and reintroduce some sense of order, value, and meaning, I think that's where we need to focus." Amen. ●

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Is Locking 'em Up the Answer?

For violent criminals probably—for the rest, it's not so clear

BY KARIN FISCHER

IT'S A POLITICIAN'S DREAM COME TRUE. FOR the second year in a row, the Clinton administration has had the pleasure of announcing that, after a decade-long rise in crime, America's streets are actually becoming safer. In November, the Justice Department's National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), an annual poll of 50,000 U.S. households, showed that during the first six months of last year the U.S. saw a 10 percent drop in violent crime from the same period in 1996. Just one week later, the FBI announced that its Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR), comprising data from 17,000 police departments nationwide, showed a 5 percent decrease in violent crime and a 4 percent drop in property crime from the previous year. A cause for celebration on their own merits, these numbers are even more impressive considering that in '96, both of the surveys had reported record-setting declines in both violent and property crime. Of particular note, the UCR indicated that violent crime in 1996 fell 7 percent—the largest decrease in 35 years.

The change has been most dramatic in urban areas, Boston being among the most notable. Last year, homicides in Boston dropped to a 30-year low, and robberies to a 26-year low. Even more significantly, homicides committed by young people decreased by more than 65 percent while murders and assaults involving guns all but disappeared.

But city residents aren't the only ones seeing the benefits. "The drop has been very sharp ... and very broad over the last few years," says Lawrence A. Greenfeld, deputy director of the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics. "It affects whites and blacks, young and old, cities and rural areas." All told, the American crime rate is now equal to that of the Netherlands, Australia, or Canada.

The Clinton administration has been understandably upbeat about the recent trend, patting itself on the back for its crime-fighting achievements. Attorney General Janet Reno remarked: "Crime has been falling for several years because policy makers, law enforcement, and ordinary Americans are coming together to do the right thing."

Of course, most notable among the steps being taken to combat crime may be the dramatic increase in incarcerations. Today, more Americans than ever before are behind bars. Over the past two decades, as crime rates have fluctuated, incarceration rates have risen steadily—doubling over the last 10 years, tripling over the last 20. As of June 1996, almost 1.7 million of us were incarcerated—a number roughly equivalent to the population of Utah. What's more, tougher sentencing laws are ensuring that criminals in most states are staying in jail for longer periods of time. Although sentences handed down in most state courts are not necessarily longer, they are more determinate. Twenty years ago, a convicted felon might receive a sentence of two to 20 years; today, in 85 percent of cases, he would be slapped with a fixed sentence of, say, 12 years.

Almost certainly, the high incarceration rates have had some effect on the crime rates. Whatever the

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long-term drawbacks of this nation's lock-'em-up mentality, if you put enough people behind bars for a long enough time, there will be fewer people left roaming free to commit crimes. What's more, crime is primarily a young person's vocation, and the longer sentences now in vogue may keep potential repeat offenders out of commission during their prime-crime years.

But today's tough-on-crime advocates would do well to take a closer look at the numbers. While the lock-'em-up strategy may be effective in dealing with certain types of crime, with others it may actually be undermining our crime-fighting efforts.

Case Not Closed

Not everyone is comfortable with drawing parallels between incarceration and crime rates. "It's tough to say that crime rates are decreasing in the last two years simply because of incarceration," says Carnegie Mellon criminology professor Alfred Blumstein. "Why wasn't incarceration the answer when crime was going up?"

But as Lawrence Greenfeld points out: "You can't have more than a million people under lock and key ... and not have some crime reduction value." What's more, says Greenfeld, one has to look at the people who are being locked away. Between 1990 and 1995, the number of violent offenders behind bars increased 47 percent. A recent Bureau of Justice Statistics survey of 14,000 state and 6,000 federal prisoners found that eight out of 10 had at least one prior conviction; approximately half had been incarcerated for violent crimes, while more than 60 percent had a past history of violence. A 1993 study of prisoners in New Jersey found that each had committed a median number of 12 non-drug-related crimes in the year before he or she was caught. "Approximately 90 percent of state prisoners have a history of violence and recidivism," notes Greenfeld. "It's hard to imagine that taking this group off the streets wouldn't have a significant effect—it's just hard to know how much."

In fact, "how much" seems to vary significantly depending on the type of crime involved. The most recent NCVS revealed that the biggest drop in crime rates during the first half of 1997 was in the area of sex crimes—which also happens to be the second-fastest growing segment of the prison population. But the fastest-growing segment of the population, drug offenders, has not been accompanied by a similar decrease in drug offenses. Neither the NCVS's nor UCR's celebrated survey results included data on drug crimes, which are considered victimless. Yet 25 percent of new offenders in the 1990s have been imprisoned for drug-only crimes (up from 10 percent in the early '70s); between 1990 and 1995, the number of drug-related offenders rose 27 percent. But even as both the arrests for drug-abuse violations and the percentage of federal incarcerations for drug-related crimes have been climbing since the late '80s, drug use during that period has not shown a marked decline.

Blumstein offers one possible explanation for the disparity, pointing out the supply-and-demand aspect of certain types of criminal behavior. "There's not a

It's the Little Things

Another factor in the drop in crime may be the "zero tolerance" policy adopted by numerous cities in recent years. Perhaps the best known and most dramatic story is the New York City turnaround. In 1989, the New York City Transit Authority decided to take on the petty criminal: the fare jumpers, the graffiti artists, the panhandlers. By attacking the little things, the transit police, headed by William Bratton, were able to affect the big things. Crime in the subways decreased by 80 percent, and the city's murder rate dropped precipitously; estimates suggest that homicides, which topped 2,200 in the early 1990s, will dip below 800 this year.

This approach to crime fighting is based on what has come to be known as the "Broken Windows" theory, after the 1996 book *Fixing Broken Windows* coauthored by George Kelling, a professor of criminology at Rutgers University. "Citizens have known intuitively that disorder creates fear," says Kelling, who is also a research fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. "If you deal with disorder, you deal with crime. Let a person violate the little things, and soon they violate the big stuff." With this philosophy in mind, the "Broken Windows" approach has been implemented in cities across the country, including Baltimore, San Diego, and Dallas.

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market for rape, so if you take a rapist off the street, the niche is not filled," he explains. Drug crimes, however, are another story. "One of the strange ironies in the growth in incarceration is that we've been locking people away for drug offenses," says Blumstein. Drug-dealing is a "demand-driven market," he explains, which means that imprisoned dealers are simply replaced by other individuals willing to push to make a buck. As a result, our much-lauded War on Drugs is not only packing prisons with drug offenders—a category of criminal apparently undeterred by incarceration—it is also generating a market for even more pushers out on the streets.

As more and more drug offenders are dumped into the system, states are facing another marketing reality: Imprisonment is costly business. California and Florida now spend more to incarcerate people than to educate their college age populations. Prison space is at a premium everywhere from Ohio to Texas. As of last March, California's prison system was housing 148,000 inmates in facilities intended to hold a mere 80,000. (On the local level, in 1996 some 325,000 inmates in California's county jails were released early because of overcrowding.) Increasingly, states will have to make tough spending decisions about whether to construct additional prisons or to invest in area schools, roads, tax cuts, etc.

If one of the central purposes of criminal law is to help protect society from crime, the split in the impact of incarceration on different types of crime rates suggests that our current penal system is out of focus. While evidence indicates that incarceration may help reduce violent crime, no such evidence exists regarding drug offenses. At the very least, this suggests it's time to take a closer look at our policies towards non-violent offenders. ●

The Washington Monthly

Journalism Award

NOVEMBER 1997

KEITH BRADSHER

"License to Pollute"

The New York Times

Sport utility vehicles have caught the eye of the American consumer in a big way. With more than three times as many of them on the road today as in 1975, the popularity of these suburban status symbols has far outpaced that of domestic automobiles. Bradsher describes how the Clinton administration, under heavy pressure from a domestic auto industry keen on protecting the huge profits SUVs provide, has allowed the vehicles to maintain their classification as "light trucks"—even though doing so exempts these heavy polluters from the more rigorous fuel-efficiency and emissions standards imposed on passenger cars.

MICHAEL CROWLEY

"Tom the Meek"

The Boston Phoenix

Boston's crime rate has plummeted in recent years, and its economy is booming. Mayor Thomas Menino coasted to reelection unchallenged last November, but Crowley finds that his 82 percent approval rating is unwarranted. Invoking the cost-cutting innovations of "urban renaissance" mayors in Philadelphia, Chicago, Indianapolis, and other cities, Crowley takes a hard look at Menino and finds an old-wave mayor who has not honored his promise to improve city services. Especially in the current era of devolution and declining federal aid, Menino's failure to confront the city's bloated and inefficient administration is a serious liability.

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including two copies of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Nominations for stories run in December and January are due February 1.

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Reporting From the Trenches

Welfare reform is one area where the press has looked beyond the spin to where the rubber meets the road

WASHINGTON OFTEN SEEMS TO BE fonder of make believe than of reality. The clearest evidence of the trait is its tendency to view a problem as having been dealt with when a legislative solution to it is enacted. Bill Clinton started talking about the 100,000 cops that his crime bill had put on the street as soon as the bill was passed in 1994. But today, fewer than 50,000 more cops are actually working.

Too often the press, instead of exposing the make believe, is part of the conspiracy. Who wants to troop around rural America finding out if the latest farm legislation is actually producing the reform it was supposed to? My favorite example—since I'm from West Virginia—is mine safety. Has the bill designed to protect miners actually done so? Or has it proved an unnecessary burden on industry? The one thing you can be sure of is that reporters don't go into the mines to find out. They will simply report what the union and the company say or tilt the story according to whether they are liberal or conservative.

Savings-and-loan deregulation is the most disastrous recent example of the failure. Deregulation was followed by about a decade of journalistic indifference to finding out whether the effects of deregulation were good or bad. This failure to report in a timely manner what was going wrong with the S&L deregulation ultimately cost the government—meaning us—$130 billion.

But now I'm happy to report there is an exception to the rule of make believe. It is welfare reform. This time the story didn't end with the passage of the bill in 1996. Papers all over the country have been looking into the actual results of this reform. As a result, a reasonably clear picture is emerging of the progress stemming from reform and the problems that have followed in its wake.

We publish the following excerpts from that reporting, first so that our readers will know the story they tell, and second so that other journalists will be inspired to do similar investigations not only of welfare reform but of what is really happening with other government programs where the rubber hits the road.

Incidentally, we are proud to note that some of the best reporting on the effect of welfare reform has been done by two alumni of this magazine: Jason DeParle of *The New York Times* and Katherine Boo of *The Washington Post.* —*CP*

Progress

"More than 1.3 million people left the welfare rolls in 1996—more than 650,000 of them in just the last four months of the year, after the law was signed. The pace of decline is faster than at any time since welfare rolls peaked at 14.4 million in March 1994. ... Welfare caseloads shrank 5% in the last four months of 1996, and 10% in all of 1996. The drop of more than 650,000 in the last four months is nearly double the 377,000 in the same four months of 1995. Caseloads dropped in every state in the last four months of 1996." — *USA Today*

"[Wisconsin] expanded three new programs in Milwaukee last March and saw its caseloads suddenly plummet. One is a 'diversion program,' which requires applicants to perform 60 hours of job search activities as a condition of getting aid. Another is a 'pay for performance' plan, which reduces grants proportionately for every hour of work or training that recipients miss. A third is a program of bureaucratic incentives that measures caseload reductions and threatens lagging offices with a loss of money. The welfare rolls in Milwaukee have fallen by 7,235 families in the 10 months since the program began, compared with a

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Reducing the Rolls

"States with strong welfare-to work programs are cutting their welfare rolls dramatically in just four years, according to one new analysis. (Percent change in number of welfare recipients January 1993-July 1997.)" — *The Washington Times*

Wyoming	-73 percent
Idaho	-62 percent
Wisconsin	-58 percent
Oregon	-52 percent
Colorado	-51 percent
Mississippi	-50 percent
Oklahoma	-49 percent
Tennessee	-49 percent
South Carolina	-49 percent
Indiana	-49 percent
Alabama	-48 percent
Kansas	-46 percent
North Dakota	-44 percent
Florida	-42 percent
Massachusetts	-41 percent
Utah	-40 percent
Montana	-39 percent
Virginia	-39 percent
Georgia	-39 percent
South Dakota	-38 percent
Ohio	-38 percent
Michigan	-38 percent
Kentucky	-34 percent
Maine	-34 percent
New Hampshire	-34 percent
West Virginia	-33 percent
Louisiana	-32 percent
Maryland	-30 percent
Missouri	-30 percent
North Carolina	-30 percent
Arkansas	-30 percent
Arizona	-29 percent
Texas	-29 percent
Pennsylvania	-28 percent
Iowa	-27 percent
New Jersey	-27 percent
Vermont	-23 percent
Nebraska	-22 percent
Delaware	-21 percent
Minnesota	-21 percent
Illinois	-20 percent
Nevada	-20 percent
New Mexico	-17 percent
Washington	-17 percent
New York	-15 percent
Rhode Island	-15 percent
Connecticut	-9 percent
California	-5 percent
Alaska	-4 percent
D.C.	-2 percent
Hawaii	+36 percent

decline of 2,753 families in the previous year. Since March, new applications have declined by about 30 percent." — *The New York Times*

"Nearly three years after a controversial 'family cap' welfare-reform policy began in New Jersey, the state's welfare birthrate has continued to drop. ... At least 18 states have federally approved family cap policies, in which welfare mothers do not receive more cash if they have additional children." — *The Washington Times*

"The Westchester County workfare program has become a national model by sharply cutting welfare rolls and putting more than 15,000 welfare recipients to work since 1989." — *The New York Times*

"Fourteen welfare recipients, many of them homeless, crossed the stage [in Arlington, Va.,] to become the latest graduates of Marriott International Inc.'s welfare-to-work program. One of them, Rhonda Taylor, rose to sing to the gathering and choked up with emotion. 'You have no idea what it's like to go from dependence to independence," she said.

"But the hotel chain, which has put nearly 600 people through its welfare-to-work program in the past few years, has proved that welfare recipients can work, and its ambitious project may well become a model for corporate America." — *The Wall Street Journal*

"The best guess is that as many as 100 local companies have hired welfare recipients as a result. One who found a job through the new network is Debra Sanders, 34, a single mother of two who had been on the welfare rolls for 12 years. ... Her welfare and food-stamp benefits are being scaled down, and her rent in government housing will rise as her income goes up, but Ms. Sanders figures she still is coming out ahead financially. ... All told, some 30,000 welfare recipients have moved off cash assistance and into work in the first 18 months of the new North Carolina program, says Pheon Beal, a state official who oversees Work First. That has pushed North Carolina's welfare rolls down by more than 15%." — *The Wall Street Journal*

"Under the governor's initial plan, families on welfare would have been required to pay up to 46 percent of their income for child care. The governor proposed to make that formula far more generous yesterday by asking the legislature to require that recipients, no matter how many children they have, pay no more than 16 percent of their paycheck toward day care. ... Reisman and others say that the original plan unreal-

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istically expected welfare recipients to devote too much of their paychecks for the care of their children while they were at work." —*The Washington Post*

"UPS, with 290,000 workers, signed up last August for a state program in Illinois to help create jobs for people on welfare, becoming the first employer to do so. The company, which is based in Atlanta, gave part-time jobs starting at $8 an hour for roughly 25 hours a week to 31 residents of the Chicago area who completed a training program. Similar efforts led to the hiring of 80 workers at the company's Philadelphia hub, about 100 in New York City, and additional workers in other cities." —*The New York Times*

"Last year's welfare reform law ended most welfare for aliens who have not worked to earn their benefits. . . . Congress created a host of provisions designed to ease the transition for those already receiving welfare. First, Congress provided everyone with a one-year transition to adjust to the new policy. Second, aliens who become citizens are eligible to continue to receive benefits. Government experts predict that eventually half the aliens who would otherwise lose their benefits will become citizens. . . . The Immigration and Naturalization Service has a host of waivers for elderly or disabled aliens trying to naturalize. . . . Republicans exempted three important groups from losing welfare benefits: aliens who have worked for 10 years (including husbands and wives who together meet the 10-year requirement), those who have served or are serving in the military, and refugees (who, because they often have left their countries abruptly, are allowed to receive benefits for five years after entry to give them time to adjust to life in America). We estimate that if these categories are combined, around 60 percent of aliens receiving welfare benefits when the bill passed will continue receiving benefits." —*The Washington Post*

Problems

"As Idaho's new welfare law nears the five month mark, the number of people on welfare has fallen sharply, but the lines at soup kitchens are stretching into the streets. . . .

"The Boise Rescue Mission, which provides free food and housing in the downtown area, serves about 240 meals a day, almost double the 125 meals served at this time last year. 'We're definitely feeling the crunch,' said the Reverend Tony Chung, executive director of the mission." —*The New York Times*

"[T]he penalties in Mississippi are the nation's toughest. Those who miss appointments or decline work assignments surrender not only their entire cash grant, but all their family's food stamps and the medical insurance of adults. . . . Patricia Watson worked a day at a distant catfish-processing plant but quit after returning home to discover that her baby-sitter could not find her 6-year-old daughter. Curley Barron threw up her hands and returned her niece and nephew to foster care. Busy caring for her ailing mother, she refused to join a work program and therefore lost the $435 in cash and food stamps she was receiving for the children's monthly support. It was scenarios like these in places like this that critics of last year's landmark law feared. . . .

"Mississippi began its welfare experiment in the fall of 1995, operating a trial program called Work First in six counties. The program, run with federal permission, placed about 7,000 recipients in job-search classes. . . . About 42 percent of the participants found jobs. Only half of those—or 21 percent of the total—were still working after the program's 15th month. 'The retention rate is a huge problem,' said Bill Brister, a researcher at Millsaps College in Jackson, who evaluated the program. Meanwhile, penalty rates were high. About 19 percent violated the rules and lost all cash and food stamps. (Most had their benefits restored within two months, after complying with the program's rules.) That is, almost as many people temporarily lost their benefits as landed and kept their jobs." —*The New York Times*

"Misty Greene had a plan to get off welfare. The 21-year-old single mother was in college full time to finish her degree so she could enroll in training classes to become an ultrasound technician. As a sonographer, she could get a real job at $15 an hour and become the kind of productive and independent citizen she's always hearing about on television. But last year, the federal and state governments devised another plan to get people like Greene off welfare. They decided recipients had to have work experience, but college didn't count. To keep her check, Greene cut her college hours in half, and found a job at the local senior center kitchen where she works half a day. The new rules will extend her time in school, and as a result, her time on public assistance. She and her kids will be on welfare at least three years longer than she planned. 'It's hurting people like me who are trying,' she said. 'I don't want to stay on this forever, but it's going to take me so much longer because I can't go to school full time.' 'They're defeating their purpose,' she said. 'The purpose is to get off welfare and they're just delaying that.'" — *The Charleston (W.VA.) Gazette*

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"Because of union resistance, Westchester's Pride in Work program is forced to offer nonessential work that provides little preparation for the job market. Indeed, based on Westchester's experience, there is little evidence so far that workfare leads to the steady jobs its champions promised.... Moreover, the recipients complain that workfare interferes with the time they need to look for jobs. ...

"Pride in Work ... is putting 748 childless adults to work at 177 sites. ... The county has been able to put only 160 women with dependent children to work because it has little money to spare for day care. ... The county has also never done a survey tracking where its workfare graduates go." — *The New York Times*

"While the five companies together employ nearly 700,000 workers in the United States, they have hired only a few hundred welfare recipients through targeted efforts since the welfare bill was signed last summer. Most of those workers were put on the payroll by just one company, United Parcel Service of America Inc. ...

"[W]ith the exception of UPS, the five employers said they were either just devising programs or were having limited success finding job candidates who met their standards. ... 'One of the things we quickly discovered,' Ms. Rosenbloom said, 'was that a state's standards for employment were not the marketplace's standards. We were being sent people certified by state job training programs who could not do simple math equations, had little sense of grammar and were below standards in performing functions.'" — *The New York Times*

"State officials, especially those on the front lines, do not have the luxury of criticizing the new policy. They are supposed to make it work, and their concerns are intensely practical. Elizabeth E. Miller, a case manager for South Carolina's Department of Social Services in rural Barnwell, is trying to figure out how welfare recipients will get to jobs because 'we have no public transportation, no taxis, no buses.' Lawrence Jackson, a case manager in Bishopville, S.C., said: 'The paperwork keeps growing and growing. In addition to the old forms for determining eligibility, we now have a whole new set of paperwork for welfare reform—employment plans, individual self-sufficiency plans, referrals to job clubs and so on.' Indeed, case managers still have all the old duties: interviewing applicants, verifying income and expenses, assessing eligibility, visiting welfare recipients in their homes." — *The New York Times*

"'Everything we do is done by hand with calculators and pen and pencils,' [Lee Hanna, the welfare eligibility manager for Mariposa County, Ca.] said. 'Without a national automated system, it's difficult to see how we can carry out the five-year limit. How will I know if somebody had aid in Massachusetts if they don't tell me? There's no way under the current system.' ... Confronted with these challenges, some states have hired private, profit-making companies to run parts of their welfare, food stamp and other social service programs. ... Irma C. Bermea, deputy commissioner of the Texas Department of Human Services, which issues food stamps to more than 2.3 million people a month, said the state might have to keep manual records on cases affected by the new work rules. In the absence of any computer system to keep track of those cases, she said, state officials may re-examine childless adults every month to determine if they are still eligible for food stamps." — *The New York Times*

"The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the $29 billion available in the welfare act for child care falls $1.4 billion short of the projected need over six years. But this does not take into consideration the vast need for child care subsidies by poor families who are already working at the minimum wage or only slightly above, child advocates say." — *The Washington Post*

"When [Gov. Tommy] Thompson took office in 1987, [Wisconsin] spent $12 million a year on child care. By 1998, it will be spending $180 million annually. ... Despite the state spending on child care, which she praises, [Anne Arnesen, the director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families,] says the state's system will be inadequate for the large numbers of kids it will now have to accommodate. 'We are actually lowering Wisconsin's standards on child care, and that is unforgivable,' she says. This is a serious concern. Many of the children involved come from troubled homes and need more, not less nurturing, and even mothers of infants only a few months old are subject to work requirements." — *The Washington Post*

"[P]ublic-employee unions are up in arms ... and nowhere more so than in New York City, where Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani has already placed about 35,000 welfare recipients in his Work Experience Program. Dubbed "WEPs," they work for the city at minimum wage for enough hours a week to earn their welfare stipend. These workers are saving the city some $600 million a year compared with what it would pay union members in equivalent positions.

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No union members have been laid off; the city is relying entirely on attrition. Nonetheless, the municipal union's position is that WEPs should not take over jobs previously held by their members.... The unions demand that welfare workers ultimately be made regular unionized employees." —*The Wall Street Journal*

"[California Gov. Pete Wilson's] plan would allow counties to 'enter into performance-based contracts with nonprofit or for-profit companies to operate nearly all or parts of their welfare programs. ... For government officials who are intimidated or confused by welfare reform, the idea might offer relief. But labor unions, fearing the loss of jobs, are planning to oppose the idea. And community advocates say they are concerned about the ethics of injecting profits into the government's traditional role as caretaker of the poor."

"Already in both states, the opportunities have sparked intense competition among a range of small to giant corporations. ... Since the contracts being awarded are unprecedented, industry officials said the potential for profit is still speculative.... The strongest attraction, however, is the potential for billions of dollars in new businesses. And the gold rush already has begun." —*Los Angeles Times*

"Under the new law, most non-elderly childless adults would not be eligible to collect food stamps for more than three months in any three-year period. Republican leaders defend the provision by arguing that people will not need food stamps once they get public-service jobs. Unfortunately, only about 10 states offer workfare slots to food-stamp recipients." —*The New York Times*

"So why, in the midst of an unprecedented national drop in public assistance caseloads, has Hawaii remained a stubborn exception? What explains the 36 percent rise in welfare recipients in this tropical island state? ... [S]ocial policy analysts and welfare specialists here believe Hawaii's rising caseloads may result from a combustible mix of a stagnant state economy and a welfare system that, relative to others, has yet to be severely overhauled." —*The Washington Post*

"Wisconsin's incentive system is clouded with uncertainty: The White House has made it clear that states that put welfare recipients in public service jobs must pay the minimum wage. ... But governors have argued that they will need more money if they have to pay $4.75 an hour to recipients who resort to the most rudimentary state-created job." —*The Washington Post*

"Gov. George E. Pataki plans to seek a waiver from new federal welfare rules requiring adults to work in exchange for food stamps, sparing tens of thousands of the neediest New Yorkers from the prospect of losing their benefits, his aides said today. ... In seeking the waiver, the governor, who has trumpeted his record on economic growth, is basically acknowledging that there are not enough jobs in the state to absorb food stamp recipients..... So far, 11 other states, including Illinois, Pennsylvania and Ohio, have already applied for similar waivers by declaring that there are certain pockets in those states where the labor market is too weak to absorb welfare recipients." —*The New York Times*

"The Congressional Budget Office says one million immigrants may lose food stamps because of the new welfare law. It would cost roughly $3.7 billion over six years to restore their eligibility, the agency said." —*The New York Times*

"While states with far less experience are boasting of early success, the first recipients to leave the rolls are often the easiest to employ. A tougher test of last year's welfare overhaul will be posed by those who remain, especially over the next few years, as time limits threaten to chase them from the rolls. ... Officials estimate that 75 percent of those left on the rolls in Oregon suffer from mental health problems that could interfere with a job. Half acknowledge drug or alcohol abuse, and half say they have been beaten or sexually abused. Forty-two percent lack a high school education. Thirty percent have criminal histories." —*The New York Times*

"Municipal efforts to protect children in [Washington, D.C.] day-care centers have ranged from haphazard to nonexistent. The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) routinely fails to visit each center once a year, as required by law. The agency has only five inspectors—half the number of three years ago—to fulfill its public charge of monitoring 350 centers and hundreds of home day-care operations. Their supervisor has been absent on a workers' compensation leave since mid-1996. ...

"District day care is not an equal-opportunity hazard. Records indicate the majority of centers with lapsed licenses are in the District's poorest neighborhoods. ...

"Such deficiencies cloud the local forecast for welfare reform, which in coming months will channel another 4,000 District children—and millions of tax dollars—into already overextended subsidize day-care establishments." —*The Washington Post* ●

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LIVING OFF THE FAT OF THE LAND

The only people benefiting from diet books are the authors

BY MICHAEL FUMENTO

THE AMERICAN DIETER SURELY HATH no greater enemy than the American diet book. Like modern-day Ponce de Leons, tens of millions of Americans scour the landscape looking for the miraculous fountain. Each time they plunk down the $22.95, they think they may have found it. Each author is like Lucy holding the football for Charlie Brown. She swears that this time she won't pull it away. Like poor Charlie Brown, the dieter finds herself sore and bedazzled. But Charlie Brown knows Lucy is to blame for his failure, while the dieter tends to blame herself. After all, the book sold a million copies. It must have helped a lot of people, why not her? Of course, that's just what the other million purchasers are telling themselves. Which is why after more than 30 years of best-selling diet books, Americans are fatter than ever and yet diet books continue to be best-sellers. In fact, sales figures for diet books, videos, and audio cassettes are projected to jump from about $600 million in 1996 to over $1 billion by the end of the century.

For any of you hoping to cash in on the diet-book craze, here's the formula for writing a best-seller:

- Be fat.
- Lose weight.
- Pretend that having lost the fat you are now an expert in the area.
- Come up with a gimmick that distinguishes your book slightly from previous diet books.
- Intersperse anecdotes from formerly fat people cured by your formula. Slap a slew of recipes or a fat-counter guide onto the back so your 15,000-word article now has the heft of a 75,000-word book.
- Keep the weight off long enough for the book tour and the appearances on the "Good Morning America" and "Today" shows.
- And—most important—don't forget to offer your readers something for nothing.

Whatever you do, don't tell people they have to eat less than they want to. In fact, if you want a really successful book, tell them that what they believe to be their vices are actually good for them and that if they indulge even more, they'll weigh less. This something-for-nothing promise is often in the titles themselves, like *How to Become Naturally Thin by Eating More*, the best-selling *Eat More, Weigh Less*, and the subtitle of the best-selling *Lean Bodies*, which is *The Revolutionary Approach to Losing Bodyfat by Increasing Calories*. One cover strains so far to convince the reader to do nothing uncomfortable that it carries the contradictory title of *Fight Fat and Win: How to Eat a Low-Fat Diet Without Changing Your Lifestyle*. Presumably if your lifestyle already included a low-fat diet, you wouldn't have any use for this book, but never mind.

Other books don't have a something-for-nothing promise in their titles, but it certainly appears in their pages or otherwise on their covers. Susan Powter in *Stop the Insanity!* says on the cover that the key to being skinny is to "eat, breathe, move," albeit in the right ways. What could be finer than breathing off pounds? Barry Sears and Bill Lawren's *The Zone* says right on the back: "You can burn more fat by watching TV than by exercising." Could that be why they've sold over 400,000 books? Between *The Zone* and *Lean Bodies* it appears we'd be a nation of beanpoles if we just watched TV 12 hours a day and ate potato chips the entire time.

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In the "give 'em what they want to hear" world of diet books, nothing is too ludicrous. How about a book saying you can lose weight through eating chocolate? It's been done. Twice. Nineteen-ninety-five saw the publication of *The Chocolate Lovers' Diet* and Debra Waterhouse's *Why Women Need Chocolate*, which is a strange thing to say about something that most of the world's population wasn't exposed to until the 17th century. The only problem, of course, is these diets don't work. Yet it is a common theme in diet books that the reader, no matter how obese, is already pretty much doing everything correctly. He or she just needs to tweak his or her habits a bit.

Probably the ultimate in diet books catering to wishful thinking is Debbie Johnson's 1994 *How to Think Yourself Thin*. In it Johnson provides such valuable advice as: "The subconscious is an extremely powerful a vehicle [sic] within us which can easily control the body's weight." Right, if it's so darned easy, how come so many of us are so darned fat? The book is accompanied by such illustrations as a woman eating a thick wedge of layer cake telling herself, "Everything I eat turns to energy." So many people bought Johnson's line—and her book—that in 1996 it was picked up and republished by a major New York publishing house, Hyperion. These are the same folks who brought us *Why Women Need Chocolate*. They ought to package the two together with an accompanying advertisement that a woman can lose weight very quickly if she thinks thin thoughts while popping Hershey bars and truffles.

I was studying the weight-loss books in a store recently when something struck me. Why is it that so many have pictures of the authors on the cover? There they are, smiling at you. Debra Waterhouse's *Outsmarting the Female Fat Cell* has photos of her on both the front and back. What's going on here?

First, the picture shows that the author is slim. It conveys the message, "I'm thin and so can you be if you read this book." But more than that, we tend to put more trust in people we can see. And diet-book authors need all the trust they can get because it's usually all they have to offer. Almost none of their books contain notes, for example. One diet book I found contained a huge bibliography, but upon inspection it became obvious that this was the old high-school trick of slapping a thick bibliography onto a text to make it look heavily researched when actually the bibliography has nothing to do with what's written. Occasionally a weight-loss book will refer to a couple of medical journal articles, yet I have identified well over 1,000 important articles on obesity from 1984 to the present, with thousands more of lesser importance. Building a thesis or a book around just a couple of these is simply nonsense.

Likewise, "miracle" weight-loss books are virtually devoid of endorsements by experts in the weight-loss field. When an editor at HarperCollins told *Publisher's Weekly* "endorsements matter," she should have explained how HarperCollins sold more than 400,000 copies of *The Zone* without having any. For that matter neither did *Stop the Insanity!*, *Fit for Life*, *Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution*, *The Complete Scarsdale Medical Diet*, *The Carbohydrate Addict's Diet*, or *The Rotation Diet*—each a mega-seller—carry any endorsements.

People with good medical reputations do not risk them by endorsing dumb books, but dumb books with good sales pitches will outsell smart books with good endorsements every day of the week.

A History of Fat Quacks

The first diet guru, appearing more than a century ago, was William Banting, who actually got his diet from the British ear surgeon William Harvey. Banting lost weight on it and later published the diet as *Banting's Letter on Corpulence*. Since Banting's background wasn't in health, but rather he was an undertaker, this established the precedent that diet gurus need know nothing about nutrition or physiology.

The first heavily marketed diet plan was that of Romanian-born gynecologist Herman Taller. The title of his 1961 book, *Calories Don't Count*, introduced into popular parlance a phrase that continues to wreak havoc to this very day. Naturally, it was one many dieters wanted to hear, and so 2 million of them rushed out to buy it. Taller agreed with most diet book authors today that "all calories are not the same." But whereas today the diet gurus say it's the fat calories that will do you in, Taller blamed the carbohydrate ones. He divided all foods into two groups—the first "good," regardless of caloric content, and the second "bad," regardless of calories. He then warned the reader that while "You do not have to count calories," you should not "eat *any* of the foods that are not permitted." His list of impermissible foods included essentially all carbohydrates and refined sugars. He then went on to encourage readers to consume unsaturated fats (those that are not hard at room temperature, like cooking oil). "When you eat large quantities of unsaturated fats," he explained, "you set in motion a happy cycle. You *stimulate* body production of certain hormones which work to release fats stored around the body. You *limit* the production of insulin, a substance which seems to prevent the release of stored fat. And you change the character of your fat. The hard, tough fat, difficult for the body to utilize, softens." All nonsense,

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you say? Sure, but Taller sold 2 million books.

Such a successful formula was sure to inspire imitators, and indeed many of them were successful as well. They included the *Air Force Diet Book* (neither developed by nor endorsed by the Air Force); *The Drinking Man's Diet*; Irwin Stillman's *The Doctor's Quick Weight-Loss Diet* and its companion volume, *Doctor's Inches-Off Diet*; and *Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution.* All offered readers essentially the same high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets. Psychiatrist Richard Mackarness, in a 1962 book called *Eat Fat and Grow Slim*, actually urged readers to gorge themselves on fat. "Eggs, fish, meat are the stand-bys," he wrote. "You can eat as much as you like of these, preferably sautéed in butter or cooking oils or deep fried in fat, BUT WITH NO FLOUR, BATTER, OR BREAD CRUMBS."

High-protein, low-carbohydrate diets work in the short run for several reasons. First, they greatly restrict your choices. Most Americans get half their calories from carbohydrates. Give people menus that reduce their access to that half and they will be hard pressed to make up the calories from fat and protein. In essence, then, you're probably restricting their calorie intake. Restricting calorie intake does result in weight loss.

Another way they work is that they temporarily suppress the appetite by creating something called "ketosis." Deprived of carbohydrates, the body burns off some fat but also considerable muscle, producing ketones that must be extracted through the kidneys. Between the loss of muscle and the water loss from the kidneys excreting the ketones and the appetite-suppressing effect of ketosis, weight loss comes quickly but little of the weight is from fat. In any event, soon the body rebels against this unhealthy regimen. It adjusts to the ketosis, the hunger returns, and the weight loss stops. But by then the dieter has already told 10 friends how great the book is and they've bought it themselves.

In the meantime, other diet fads have come and gone. One that was dormant for awhile was the one-food or food-group diet. A couple of examples are Joel Herskowitz's 1987 *Popcorn Plus Diet* and Judy Moscovitz's 1986 *Rice Diet Report.* Another is Judy Mazel's million-selling 1981 book, *The Beverly Hills Diet*, which restricted the dieter to exotic fruits such as mangoes and papayas for days at a time. Such a diet would require the average woman to eat about eight pounds of mangoes a day to supply her normal energy requirement. It's hardly surprising that it worked until such inevitable time as the dieter got sick to death of eating exclusively from a menu that looked like it belonged on Carmen Miranda's head. "It's a terrible book," wrote Philip White, director of the American Medical Association's department of foods and nutrition. "Its effort at medical or scientific backing comes directly from the nineteenth century. There is very little in the book in the way of explanation of nutrition, biology, or digestion that is in fact the truth." In any case, Mazel was back in 1996 with *The New Beverly Hills Diet.* She has no doubt calculated that everyone will forget that her book didn't work 15 years earlier, remembering only that lots of people bought it.

When it comes to diet plans, there's no such thing as something that's too outlandish, though some schemes are just too simple to be made into books. One was the water diet, which prescribed a certain number of glasses a day to "wash away" fat. Sorry, but fat doesn't "wash away." The water diet might work only in that you spend practically half your waking hours drinking and the other half urinating, leaving little time for other activities, including eating.

Food combining is a fad that is still with us. It says that foods eaten in different combinations can somehow fool the body into absorbing fewer calories than the individual foods contain. The king of these fads is Harvey and Marilyn Diamond's *Fit for Life*, the paperback edition of which claims it's "America's All-Time No. One Health and Diet Book" with "Over 3 million copies in print." In it the authors proposed that it does not so much matter what you eat, but when you eat it and in what combination foods are consumed. Their plan includes recommendations such as not eating anything but fruit before noon, and never eating protein at the same time as carbohydrates. (And while you're at it, don't have sex during the full moon, else you conceive a child who becomes a werewolf.) The Diamonds offer nothing but anecdotal evidence to support their claims. "It would be difficult to choose the most ridiculous diet book ever written," writes Stephen Barrett and the editors of *Consumer Reports* in their book *Health Schemes, Scams, and Frauds*, "but surely *Fit for Life* ... would be right up there." William Jarvis, president of the National Council Against Health Fraud, clearly agreed, saying "*Fit for Life* seems unprecedented in the amount of misinformation contained." He added, "Its only socially redeeming feature is that its popularity may alert American educators to their failure to impart the most fundamental knowledge about health and nutrition to the students entrusted to their care."

For every diet there may be some successful adherents. If somebody swears up and down that they lost weight and kept it off with Dr. Quack's Gummi Bear Diet, who am I to argue? But there are no magical formulas with weight loss. If they're offering you something that sounds too good to be true, it is. ●

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Memo *of the* Month

U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

IKP:NDH:RYH
79-189(4)

Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts Branch
P.O. Box 65310
Washington, DC 20035-5310

OCT 24 1997

Dr. David J. Garrow
Emory University Law School
Atlanta, GA 30322-2770

Dear Dr. Garrow:

This is in further response to your June 28, 1979 and March 9, 1980 Freedom of Information Act requests seeking access to and copies of specific microfilm housed in the John F. Kennedy Library. We apologize for the long delay in responding to you.

In partial response to your request, please find the enclosed documents of the Civil Rights Division dated January, 1961, through December, 1963 of Reel Six (6). We regret the poor quality of some of the copies printed from the microfilm, but these are the best copies available from our files.

Sincerely.

Isabelle Katz Pinzler
Acting Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

By:

Nelson D. Hermilla, Chief
Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts Branch
Civil Rights Division

Enclosures

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Straight Talk on Race

President Clinton's ongoing national dialogue on race relations may be laudable, but it will do little good unless Americans can break free from the simplistic formulas that define the current debate. The following two reviews are an important step in that direction. Richard Kahlenberg makes an original argument that in order for affirmative action to be both effective and popular it must be refocused to correct the disparities between the classes instead of those between the races. And Kahlenberg finds intriguing evidence to support his proposal in a new book by Paul Sniderman and Edward G. Carmines. Next, Scott Shuger explains how Lou Cannon's fresh new reporting on the Rodney King beating will force readers to rethink their assumptions about the true meaning of that infamous event.

Affirmative action should not be a black-and-white issue

by Richard D. Kahlenberg

SINCE 1994 AMERICA'S 30-year experiment with affirmative action has clearly been in jeopardy, but the struggle over its final outcome is anything but predictable. Opponents of race and gender preferences declared victory when a California initiative banning preferences was approved in 1996, only to suffer defeat on a similar referendum in Houston in 1997. In the U.S. Senate, opponents successfully blocked Bill Lann Lee's confirmation as assistant attorney general for civil rights, but in the House of Representatives, an attempt to curtail affirmative action went down to defeat in committee. Opponents of preferences appeared to be headed for a big win when the Supreme Court agreed to hear a case involving the use of race in layoffs, but a coalition of big business and civil rights groups prevented the case, *Piscataway v. Taxman*, from being heard by financing an out-of-court settlement.

RICHARD D. KAHLENBERG, *a fellow at the Center for National Policy, is author of* The Remedy: Class, Race, and Affirmative Action *and is writing a book on economic desegregation of public schools.*

REACHING BEYOND RACE
Paul M. Sniderman
and
Edward G. Carmines
Harvard University Press, $22.95

The great national debate over affirmative action is turning out to be more complex than we thought. Publication of a fascinating new book, *Reaching Beyond Race*, should help us understand the increasingly complicated affirmative action discussion. The authors, political science professors Paul M. Sniderman of Stanford and Edward G. Carmines of Indiana University, employ a number of tricks to help us determine what Americans really think about race and affirmative action. Along the way, the book explodes various myths held by both sides of the affirmative action controversy. Of the book's four central findings, the first three are likely to disturb proponents of affirmative action, while the fourth will unsettle opponents.

Finding #1: Deep down, white liberal Democrats are as opposed to racial preferences as white Republican conservatives. Pollsters find that when asked directly, white liberals are much more likely to support preferential affirmative action than white conservatives, but, the authors wondered, is this true because white liberals say what is politically correct rather than what they really think?

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In order to understand the true feelings of liberals, Sniderman and Carmines devised what they call the "List Experiment." One-half of a random sample of whites was read a list of three items, and asked to name how many items make them angry (but not which ones). The list consisted of the following: "the federal government increasing the tax on gasoline; professional athletes getting million-dollar-plus salaries; large corporations polluting the environment." The other randomly sampled half, demographically identical to the first half, was read the same list with a fourth item added: "black leaders asking the government for affirmative action." By subtracting the number of items identified by the second group as contrasted with the first, the experiment reveals substantial covert white liberal anger about affirmative action: 57 percent of white liberals are angry about affirmative action compared to 50 percent of conservative; 65 percent of Democrats and 64 percent of Republicans. While the finding is surprising on one level, the authors say, it is consistent with the view that there is a liberal reason to oppose affirmative action—a moral opposition to unequal treatment based on race.

Finding #2: Racism plays a very small role in white opposition to affirmative action. Some proponents of affirmative action explain white opposition as simply another manifestation of white racism. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, for example, likens opposition to racial preference in the late 1990s to opposition to *Brown v. Board of Education* in the 1950s. But Sniderman and Carmines find: "Race prejudice, far from dominating and orchestrating the opposition to affirmative action, makes only a slight contribution to it."

Using data from the 1992 National Election Studies survey on white attitudes toward blacks, the authors separate whites by tolerance level. They do find, as one would expect, that there is strong opposition to affirmative action among the most bigoted whites. But they also find that the most tolerant whites are opposed to affirmative action preferences. "Looking only at the 25 percent of the [white] public whose attitudes toward blacks is most favorable, we discovered that opposition to affirmative action in this group is overwhelming, with between 7 and 8 out of every 10 objecting to it." Even among those 1 percent of American whites most tolerant, 80 percent oppose race preferences in hiring.

Finding #3: Instead of healing the racial divide, affirmative action appears to contribute to racial prejudice among whites. While affirmative action surely promotes some degree of racial harmony by integrating workplaces and universities, the preferential nature of the program also appears to have an unintended consequence, the authors find: White resentment over affirmative action seems to spill over into white attitudes toward blacks generally. In the "Mere Mention Experiment," originally presented by Sniderman in a 1993 book, *The Scar of Race* (coauthored with Thomas Piazza), the researchers ask one half of a group of respondents what they think of blacks, and subsequently ask a question about affirmative action. For the other half of respondents, the order of the questions is reversed, and individuals are asked first about affirmative action, and then what they think of blacks. The two groups were divided equally by education, levels of prejudice, social background, and political outlook. When the affirmative action question appears first in the survey, the mere mention makes the percentage of whites agreeing with negative stereotypes about blacks increase: that "most blacks are lazy" rises from 20 percent to 31 percent and that "most blacks are irresponsible" rises from 26 percent to 43 percent. The experiment involves varying the order of only one question in a survey of more than 100 questions, yet triggers a statistically significant jump in white hostility.

Finding #4: Opposition to race-based affirmative action preferences is countered by strong support for helping disadvantaged people generally. The authors find that opposition to racial preferences is decidedly not part of a larger conservative opposition to all programs aimed at racial and economic inequality: In fact, there is strong support, they find, for "policies to assist the badly off, both black and white, provided that political leaders base their appeal on moral principles that reach beyond race." The authors argue that a need-based approach is more powerful, "not because it evades the reach of prejudice but because it calls into play the principle of a fairness—that all who need help should be helped, regardless of their race."

Polls show, the authors note, that when policies are framed in nonracial terms, the level of support increases. Where 56 percent of whites support tax breaks to businesses "locating in largely black areas," 79 percent support such breaks "for locating in poor and high-unemployment areas." When policies are framed in terms of race-neutral need as opposed to race-specific criteria, support among whites increases for college scholarships for good students (94 percent vs. 77 percent), school and preschool spending (91 percent vs. 76 percent), and increasing taxes for education (65 percent vs. 46 percent).

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Surprisingly, the authors do not follow their argument to its logical conclusion, and oppose, rather than support, class-based preferences in such areas as college admissions. They argue: "Class-based affirmative action is just as vulnerable as race-based to the root objection of selecting less qualified applicants in favor of more qualified ones. The unfairness is no less, and the resentment will be no less ... ." Sniderman and Carmines present no data to support this contention. And elsewhere in the book, they make clear why class-based preferences would in fact be more morally appealing than race-based preferences: Middle-class African-Americans, they point out, "are now decisively better off than poor blacks and poor whites; it follows, in our view, that those who are badly off should be given priority over members of the middle class, regardless of race."

Public opinion supports need-based policies more readily than race- or gender-based policies, but the most powerful interest groups are organized around racial and gender identities.

Perhaps the authors believe that any deviation from "merit" is unpopular, but their own data show that, when it comes to preferences, "it obviously *can* make a difference who is to be helped." They note that in a study conducted in Great Britain, white respondents provided weak support for employment quotas for blacks and Asians (15 percent) and for women (23 percent), but very substantial support for employment quotas for the disabled (85 percent). The argument on behalf of class-based preferences in college admissions is even stronger, for an SAT score of 1250 surely means something more if achieved by a poor white or black student who lives in poverty and attends inferior schools than if achieved by a wealthy student with highly educated parents and private tutors.

While Sniderman and Carmines provide compelling polling data on an array of affirmative action questions, the book does not and cannot fully explain the tug of war over preferential policies, for the complete story requires a discussion of interest group politics. Where public opinion supports need-based policies more readily than race- or gender-based policies, today the most powerful interest groups are organized around racial and gender identities rather than around economic status, so the transition to need-based programs will be heavily resisted.

Moreover, in Houston and in the Piscataway case, we have seen evidence of strong business support for the status quo on affirmative action. Under the current legal regime, businesses can be sued by people of color and women for discrimination, but are unlikely to lose reverse-discrimination suits filed by white males. If the current rules tilt away from affirmative action—and employers are left equally vulnerable to discrimination and reverse-discrimination suits—the risk of legal liability increases dramatically.

On the whole, however, the findings outlined in *Reaching Beyond Race* provide some powerful evidence that over time we are likely to see a shifting away from race- and gender-based preferences to programs more broadly addressed to those in need—regardless of their color or gender. The fact that racism is not at the root of opposition to affirmative action means further education is unlikely to shift public opinion; the fact that white liberals are often covertly angry about racial preferences means continuing support for preferences is even more fragile than we thought. And the bottom line is, the fact that race preferences can actually exacerbate racism should give pause to those who support affirmative action as a tool for fostering better race relations.

The finding that Americans also have a reservoir of good will—a strong desire to do something to help those left behind—suggests that voters would like to replace racial preferences with a positive need-based program. The most intriguing moment of President Clinton's recent town hall meeting on race in Akron, Ohio, came when the president raised the question of whether class-based affirmative action could replace race-based preferences. This, the president said, was "the nub of the affirmative action debate." He noted, "Politically and substantively you'll help more people and build more unity by having an economic basis for social policy now." Did someone slip *Reaching Beyond Race* to the president before the event? ●

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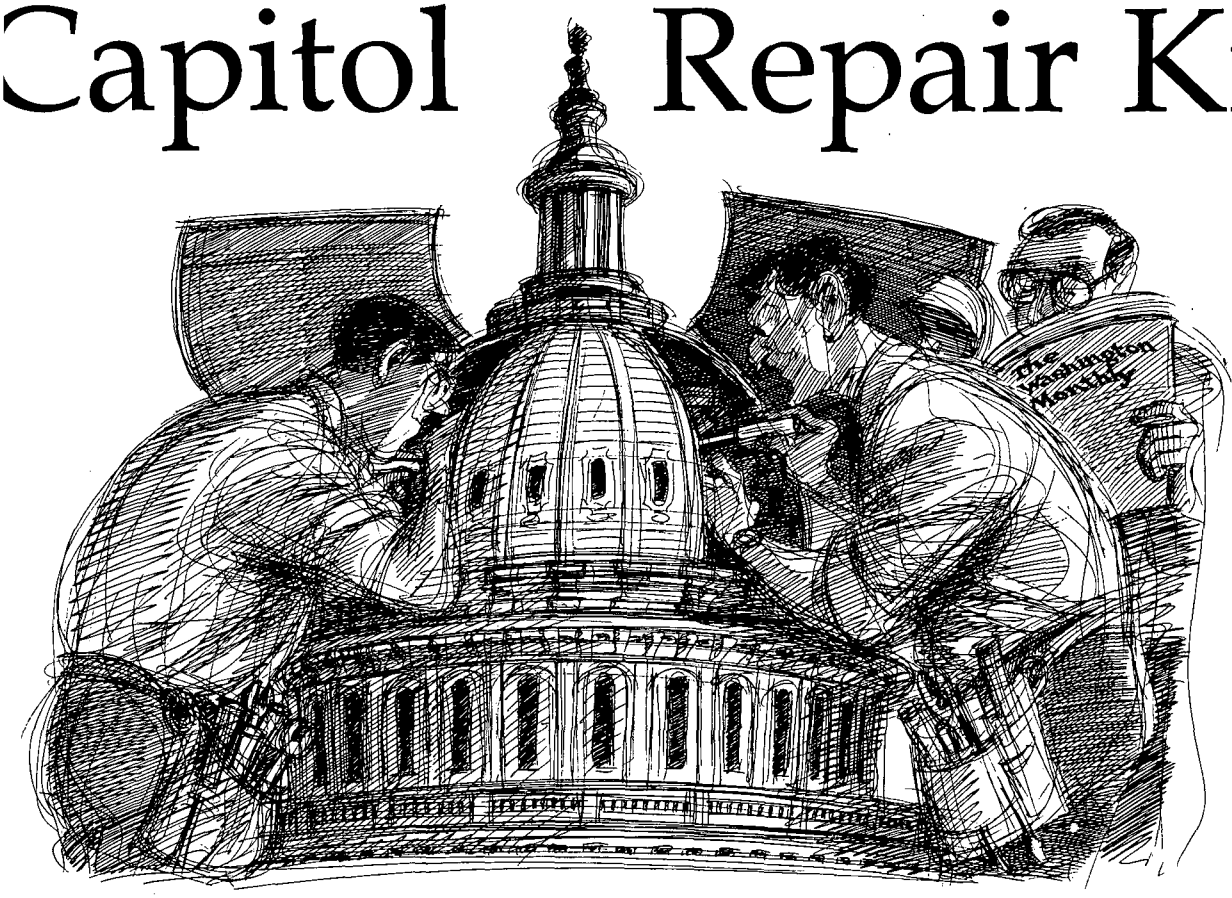

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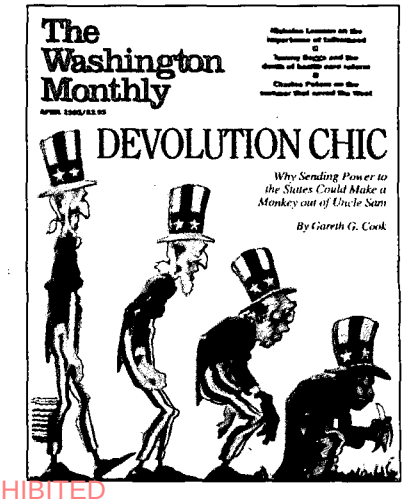

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The part of the Rodney King tape America didn't see

by Scott Shuger

OFFICIAL NEGLIGENCE:
How Rodney King and the Riots Changed Los Angeles and the LAPD
By Lou Cannon
Times Books, $30

WANT TO BRING A PLEASANT evening with friends to a screeching halt? Say the following sentence: "I think the cops on the Rodney King tape got a raw deal." One way or another, that party is *over*. But this is one of the principal theses of Lou Cannon's book. (His upbringing in the newspaper cult of objectivity keeps him from saying it in so many words, though.) Cannon's development of this politically incorrect thought is exceptionally well-reported and fair-minded.

Reporting and fairness and Rodney King—three concepts that throughout the whole literally bloody saga in L.A. rarely made a joint appearance. While the topic was hot, we had no shortage of "coverage," but little in the way of explanation. Now that it's stone cold, we are finally in a position to get past the shortcomings of journalism to the strengths of history. For the most part, Cannon, best known as a *Washington Post* political reporter and biographer of Reagan but who also once headed up the *Post*'s L.A. bureau, has, with this book, done precisely that.

And history, as Edward Gibbon observed, is mostly crime, folly, and misfortune. In the case of L.A. in the early 1990s, the crime was soaring, the folly was that the LAPD higher-ups, personified by Chief Daryl Gates, believed they could still fight it the same way they had in the good old "Dragnet" days, and the misfortune (before, and particularly during the riots) fell on the well-intentioned cops in the field and especially on the law-abiding citizens they were sworn to "protect and serve." The police problem in L.A., expertly limned by Cannon, boiled down to this: The LAPD was a primarily white-male force that had long prided itself on no-questions-asked aggressive ("proactive" became the modern euphemism) tactics in a place that had become, almost without the cops noticing it, the most multi-cultural, socially complicated city in the country. The department was still trying to master the city, which now more than ever needed a public servant. There were plenty of warning signs long before the King tape: the numerous dubious shootings of black and Latino suspects, a long-simmering dispute about the LAPD's use of a submission choke-hold that was implicated in the deaths of at least a dozen black men, and the millions spent by the city to settle excessive force lawsuits brought by citizens against the cops.

As Cannon's narrative makes clear, there was no silver bullet solution to all this, but there were some identifiable problems that could and should have been addressed. Typically, they were all of the "boring" bureaucratic variety. First, there was the problem of the near-total independence of the LAPD chief, who could only be fired for cause—that is, lying, stealing, etc.—not for incompetence or policy disagreements. (During the riot's first hours, Gates was speaking out against political control of his department at a fundraiser in Brentwood when he should have been downtown or on the scene.) Second, there was the department's near-total hostility to what is now called "community policing," getting police out of their cars and into the neighborhoods. Third, LAPD officers confronting resistant suspects did not have (especially after the department banned the choke-hold), either in their equipment or in their training, enough alternatives to the gun and the baton. Cannon relates how, after the King beating but before the Simi Valley verdicts, officers in charge of responding to possible disturbances pleaded with their superiors for such intermediate tools as leg grabbers, nets, and bean-bag guns. They were turned down. At least now the LAPD uses bean bags and pepper spray and has undertaken martial arts-based training for controlling suspects on the ground without seriously injuring them.

It's Cannon's contention that these unaddressed away-from-the-ball issues were the smoldering fuses that eventually lit off the L.A. riots. He's right. Cops who feel physically threatened will use the weapons they've got, whether they're appropriate to the level

SCOTT SHUGER, *a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly, *writes the "Today's Papers" column for* Slate.

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of instigation or not. Cops who only respond to emergency calls (that is still the norm in L.A.) and who are otherwise only seen driving by are harder to know, easier to hate. And a chief who won't make changes in these areas but can't be fired is a threat to all the cops under him and to the citizens they're supposed to work for. Cannon rightly points to the post-riot establishment of civilian control of the LAPD as the key reform that makes all others possible.

Cannon's also good on the other parts of the system—most notably the press and the courts—that came into play during the King saga. Here too, at the time, the mistakes may have seemed beneath notice (and at several points Cannon admits that in his daily reporting on the case for the *Post*, he didn't notice them either), but *Official Negligence* adeptly shows how they added up.

Let's Go to the Videotape

Regarding the media, Cannon returns again and again to the points that a) the version of the King tape invariably shown on CNN and the local L.A. channels omitted (because news editors didn't like its blurry footage) the beginning portion that showed King charging Powell prior to any baton hits; b) the videotape didn't start until approximately five minutes after King was stopped, during which time officers indisputably tried to arrest him without hurting him; and c) the media fell into the sloppy habit of referring to the incident as the beating of a black motorist by white cops, when it would have been far more accurate to say it was the beating of a large, unsearched suspect thought to be an ex-con (true) and on PCP (we'll never know, but Cannon thinks it's plausible and accepts in any case that the cops genuinely thought this) who was resisting arrest. A particularly gross video oversimplification that Cannon criticizes is the L.A. stations' relentless habit after the riots of showing the King tape in tandem with the video of the Reginald Denny beating, as if there were any analogy between that arrest and a previously convicted felon's unprovoked racially motivated assault of an innocent person.

If you take it as gospel that the King beating was likewise racially motivated, you need to read this book, which assembles a lot of facts suggesting otherwise. Such as: Stacey Koon had previously—on his own time—investigated and gotten charges brought against a cop who unprovokedly beat two black transients. Also, Koon once gave mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to a collapsed black transvestite he believed (correctly, it turns out) had AIDS. The strongest evidence of racial animus in the case was the infamous and offensive "gorillas in the mist" computer message sent by officer Laurence Powell before the King episode even started. But Powell handled the incident he referred to—a black couple's raucous dispute—completely evenhandedly. And as Cannon notes, Powell's message and the other few offensive ones turned up by Warren Christopher's investigation into the King beating represented "one-tenth of 1 percent of all computer transmissions" reviewed. How many other workplaces, Cannon wonders, would fare so well?

My only criticism of Cannon on the King-era media coverage is that he's a little soft on print journalism. (Some of this may be professional courtesy, or perhaps his research immersion in the best of the local press distracted him from the worst.) Yes, the dailies did a more nuanced job than TV, but the city's main newspaper, the *Los Angeles Times*, was poisonously politically correct, coming up with such b.s. as this prose right next to a picture of rioters trashing a supermarket: "Empowered by their sense of the verdict's injustice, they are applying a different standard." The first issue of the *Times* magazine to address the Simi Valley trial aftermath used the word "riot" only in quotation marks.

Location, Location, Location

Cannon explains how the King trial got moved to Simi Valley, a jurisdiction so saturated with current and retired white cops that it was even less ethnically diverse than Ventura County as a whole. In granting the change of venue, an appeals judge stressed the dangers to a fair trial posed by the extensive coverage the King tape had already received in the L.A. media market, but the specific choice of venue was left to the trial judge, Stanley Weisberg, who then assigned it to Simi, which is completely within the L.A. media market. Cannon suggests, but doesn't quite say (he uses a quote from Warren Christopher instead), that Weisberg, who lived in western L.A. County, made his selection for personal convenience.

Cannon gives the jurors of the three Rodney King cases (that's right: the state criminal trial, the federal criminal trial, and the local civil damages lawsuit) higher marks than conventional wisdom issued them. His ultimate view is that Koon, although mistaken in (and legally ill-served by) his belief that the King arrest was from start to finish a well-controlled use of force, committed no actions providing evidence of criminal intent, and numerous actions providing evidence of professional intent. And Cannon often notes that Timothy Wind stopped to evaluate the effect of each of his

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baton blows and kicks as LAPD policy requires and only hit again when King moved. He doesn't pretend to know exactly why Theodore Briseno put his foot on King's upper back at one point, but believes his motivation was probably to keep King down so the baton hitting would stop. (Remember, Briseno had previously grabbed Powell's baton.) It's only Powell's behavior that Cannon views as a "close question." He feels that Powell was probably an arrogant and technically lousy police officer. (Most experts he quotes agree that one of the reasons Powell had to deliver so many baton blows was that he was delivering them ineffectively.) But he stops short of calling him a criminal. That these are the opinions of a veteran reporter after five years of study suggests that there was wisdom operating in each King jury. It's forgotten now, but the Simi jury deadlocked on one assault count against Powell. Wind and Briseno were acquitted twice. And Koon and Powell were (under extraordinary community and government pressure to convict) only held criminally responsible in the federal case for the last 35 seconds of violence, which the jurors recognized didn't produce any of King's serious injuries. And the civil jurors refused to award any punitive damages.

I learned a lot from Cannon's discussion of the Soon Ja Du murder case, which shortly before the first King verdicts generated immense anti-Korean, anti-white, and most importantly, anti-system, sentiment among South Central's blacks when the trial judge, Joyce Ann Karlin, refused to send shopkeeper Du to jail after she was convicted of voluntary manslaughter of a black teenage girl customer, Latasha Harlins. But I don't agree with his condemnation of Karlin's decision. After all, Cannon's own reporting shows that the key event that moved Karlin to her decision was her trip to the jail where Du would be sent, which she learned had neither Korean prisoners nor a Korean interpreter and was no stranger to violence—the judge arrived shortly after one female inmate slit the throat of another. This shows that Karlin's decision was not a matter of racism but of humanity. And even Cannon admits the decision took courage, a virtue he finds lacking in the several other judges who played their part in the "sad pattern of official negligence" by ducking the case before it was assigned to Karlin because "they did not want to face the pickets and the protests."

Above all else, Cannon's fine book shows that if such humanity and courage had been more widely distributed throughout the system, the L.A. riots never would have happened.

The Last True Populist

A close-up look at exactly who's screwing whom in America

by Molly Ivins

JIM HIGHTOWER OF TEXAS, ONE of the nation's most outspoken populists, has hauled off and leveled a roundhouse swing straight at the snout of American corporations. And none too soon. Not only has the corporate oligarchy taken over pretty much everything—politics, media, sports, science, food, and the environment, just for starters—but we've also forgotten what real populism sounds like. Pat Buchanan, God save us, is regularly referred to by the Washington press corps as a "populist."

THERE'S NOTHING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD BUT YELLOW STRIPES AND DEAD ARMADILLOS
By Jim Hightower
HarperCollins, $23

MOLLY IVINS *is a columnist for the* Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

Now comes Hightower, all wool and a yard wide, who studied under the late Ralph Yarborough and other carriers of the true torch. Some of what Hightower has to tell us is not new—students of Morton Mintz, Bill Greider, and the handful of other serious muckrakers still practicing the craft will not be amazed to learn of daily corporate malfeasance. Even so, much of Hightower's work is as astonishingly original as it is wide in scope.

Debunking Breast Cancer Awareness Month is certainly novel: Who could be against Breast Cancer Awareness? Try finding out that Breast Cancer Awareness Month has been sponsored since its inception by

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Imperial Chemical Industries, one of the world's largest producers of organochlorines. Organochlorines? Increasingly suspected as a cause of breast cancer? Yup, the same. Every poster, pamphlet, and advertisement used for Breast Cancer Awareness Month all these years has been approved, or vetoed, by Imperial Chemical Industries. Hightower, a great pursuer of corporate connections, also finds that one of Imperial's corporate offspring manufactures a highly controversial drug that is the leading treatment for breast cancer, despite its serious side effects. They get you coming, and they get you going.

The book is studded with this kind of information: Who pollutes? Who profits? Who gives to campaigns? What do they get in return? Who benefits? Who pays?

Between 75 and 80 percent of the American people do not have college degrees and they earn less than $50,000 a year. Almost no one writes for them. Except Jim Hightower. One of Hightower's all-time better ideas (and he has quite a few) is that the media should either replace its daily dwelling on the Dow Jones Average (two full pages of stock quotations in most newspapers) with the Doug Jones Average, Doug Jones standing for the average American. How's ol' Doug doin' today? Anything happen helpful to him? Interest rates fall? Price of Spam up? Any heavy lay-offs?

One oddity in Hightower's background is that he spent several years as the head of the Agribusiness Accountability Project, which gives him a long head-start when it comes to what corporations are doing to our food. After you've read Hightower on turkeys, hogs, and mad cows, it does cure you of wanting to eat for awhile. In fact, it's such gripping and griping stuff, I sometimes fear Hightower will suffer a variant of Upton Sinclair's fate. Sinclair said he aimed for the American people's heart, and hit them in the stomach by accident. Hightower is aiming for our brains, but is he entirely sure we really want to know what is in the stuff they now feed to cows?

For all the original research Hightower presents, the really interesting thing about this book is simply its populist tone. "Let's up and after the bastards" is pretty much his entire motto. Like all good populists, Hightower simply ignores what divides us—race, abortion, all manner of social and cultural issues—and concentrates on what unites us: to wit, getting screwed. As he has often said, politics is not a spectrum that runs from right to left; it's a scale that runs from top to bottom. And about 80 percent of us are out here among the screwees.

I am particularly fond of Hightower's response to the oft-heard charge that those of us who raise such concerns are guilty of "fomenting class warfare." So ungenteel, so tacky, is the implied criticism; this, as it were, has no class. When confronted with a truly amazing piece of bull, your genuine Texan responds with the polite signification, "No shit?" Much as many of you Easterners, when confronted with modern art murmur, "How interesting." Hightower's "no shit" in response to the charge of class warfare is a long howl of gleeful affirmation: Hell yes, this is class warfare, and we by-God didn't start it.

Another peculiarly populist, as opposed to liberal, characteristic is to take a long look around at reality and then start filin' your teeth. I point no finger at the beloved *Washington Monthly*, which seems to me distinguished by its incurable tendency to point out how to fix things instead of just moaning about how bad they are. But it is a depressingly common liberal trait, that habit of pointing out that we're out-manned, out-gunned, and things are bound to get worse. Hightower, however, is less inclined to dwell on what's wrong than on how to fight: who to call, where to write, how to get in touch with others of like inclination and, in general, a long, bugling call to start kickin' ass.

I have already read one review of Hightower's book that holds his Texas accent against him. (If you think a person can't write with a Texas accent, then you haven't read Hightower yet.) Since I write with a mild Texas accent myself, I am familiar with this put-down—"quaint," "folksy," "cute." I warn you right now, Hightower calls his daddy, "Daddy" and not "Father." If you can't handle that, this is not your book. On the other hand, if you enjoy someone who invests the language with spice and verve, Hightower is your man. Yeah, it's folksy, all right. Probably even cute. It's also the way a lot of people, including Hightower, really talk. I suppose he could write like William F. Buckley if he wanted to. But I'd rather hear him report, "The senator has the I.Q. of a dust bunny."

Another difference between Hightower and normal people is that he has been a politician—won statewide office as agriculture commissioner in Texas twice—so he knows whereof he speaks. His observations on political reporting are rich and delicious. Why do we report, "The Democrat won" or "The Republican won," when the real story is: "Sixty percent of the people were so damn disgusted they didn't vote for anybody today"?

When Hightower gets mad enough, he tells the story without any Texas dressing on it. I give you one example in its entirety:

> Cynthia Chavez Wall was a single mother who

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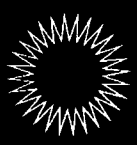
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worked at a textile factory near Hamlet, North Carolina, for 13 years. She was making $8 an hour until she was abruptly fired one day for not coming to work, having stayed at home to care for a daughter, who had come down with pneumonia.

Desperate for a job, she hired on at Imperial Food Products, even though it paid her only $4.95 an hour. She cut up and prepared chicken parts that were sold to fast-food restaurants. She often went home with her hands bleeding from the cuts she inevitably got trying to keep pace with constant demands to speed up the process. She worked up against fryers with oil heated to 400 degrees; no air conditioning, no fans, and only a few small windows. She found it hard, sweaty, dangerous, hellish work. She got 30 minutes for lunch and two 15-minute breaks. Complaining about any of this got you nothing but fired, and Ms. Wall had to have a job, so she just had to take it.

Then the morning of September 3, 1991, women in one area of the plant began to yell, 'Fire!' Flames flared and smoke billowed throughout the building, which had no sprinkler system, no evacuation plan, and only one fire extinguisher. As the fire spread quickly, panicked workers raced to the exits, but the people shoved on the closed doors to no avail. All but the very front doors had been padlocked from the outside. Company executives later said they did this to prevent chicken parts from being stolen. Trapped, 25 of the 90 employees died in the flames. More than 50 others were burned or injured. Cynthia Chavez Wall's body was found at one of the doors.

OK, lots of people could have told that story. *AP* could have written it. You may even recall that at the time the media wrote about the "horrific accident" and how terrible it was. But how many tied it to cuts in OSHA, to the failure of state safety regulations? It turns out the plant had never been inspected for safety in its 11-year history, although the U.S. Department of Agriculture visited it several times to check on the quality of the chicken meat. And two years later, when all the television cameras had left and all the politicians had held their hearings and moved on, one group did go back to Hamlet and the surrounding area. Imperial Food Products is no longer there, but nothing has changed in the other poultry plants. "Assembly-line speedups continue to cause excessive injuries, stifling heat and oppressive working conditions remain, ill and injured employees are forced to stay on the line or be fired, and, yes, doors are still locked from the outside."

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Political Booknotes

The Dark Side of a Fairy Tale

by Sandra McElwaine

MARIETTA TREE WAS THE quintessential WASP—a glamorous, freewheeling spirit born into the stern, judgmental Peabody clan, one of Boston's finest families. Née Mary Endicott, Marietta was the rebellious only daughter of a reserved Episcopal minister, a parsimonious and austere mother, and most importantly, the granddaughter of the revered Rector of Groton. An effervescent, leggy blonde, Marietta was an accomplished flirt and irresistible to men from an early age. At Groton she created havoc when she appeared in the dining room or at the playing fields, and in her later years she remained the center of attention, pursued and surrounded by admirers and beaux.

NO REGRETS: The Life of Marietta Tree
by Caroline Seebohm
Simon & Schuster, $27.50

No Regrets, which chronicles Marietta's life, is packed with famous names, places, parties, and political intrigue and reads like a *Who's Who* of the 20th century. It should have been the stuff of fairy tales, but unfortunately it is not. With access to family and close friends, letters, diaries, and engagement books, author Caroline Seebohm pierces the mystique surrounding Marietta to reveal a troubled woman who led a hidden life: clandestine love affairs, estrangement from her four brothers and two daughters, guilt and anxiety over a loveless childhood, emotional isolation, and two failed marriages. To avoid reality, Marietta filled her time with frenzied activity, social and political, and when she at last succumbed to cancer in 1991, at the age of 74, she was filled with remorse as she tried to retrieve her relationships and re-spool the threads of her past. Seebohm's book, therefore, although extremely well written, is wrongly titled. *With Regret* would be much closer to the truth.

Unlike many of her rich, spoiled friends, Marietta grew up in a strict and frugal household. Her mother was appalled when a guest once asked for two lumps of sugar. Although the Peabodys were socially supreme, they were not well-off and frequently depended on wealthy relatives. As a result, saving face and keeping up a good front formed the core of Marietta's personality and she retreated behind a mask of impervious charm. Unable to accompany friends on expensive trips and forced to wear the same evening gown to opulent debutante balls put a crimp in Marietta's adolescence, but she rarely complained and set her sights on financial freedom and a career in the Foreign Service. She was later crushed to discover she could enter only by marrying into it.

At 19, Marietta was prescient. When asked to predict her own future, she wrote down, "Parties, people, and politics." Her first husband, Desmond FitzGerald, a proper New York lawyer, introduced the beautiful aristocrat to Manhattan's haute monde and she discovered the world she craved. By day, Marietta worked at *Life* as a fact checker, but at night, she donned her signature black-mesh stockings and went partying with the Astors, Paleys, and Warburgs. She described those years as "a fever of happiness."

In 1945, while FitzGerald was away at war, Marietta embarked on a passionate affair with film director John Huston and "went head over heels." The pair contemplated marriage, but Marietta ditched Huston after meeting Ronald Tree, a bisexual but wealthy and urbane Anglo-American with magnificent homes in England and Barbados. He was 20 years her senior, and when they decided to marry, Marietta's parents were horrified—there had never been a divorce in the Peabody clan. Despite their condemnation, Marietta pressed on, separating herself from her family to attain a stellar role in international society.

With Tree's money behind her, Marietta established an eclectic salon in New York and plunged into Democratic politics, becoming an ardent supporter of presidential contender Adlai Stevenson. The two began a romance in 1952, which placed Marietta at the pinnacle of power and led to her appointment to the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission. The affair lasted until 1965 when Stevenson collapsed and died on a London street corner with Marietta at his side. (Although Stevenson was rumored to be homosexual, the Washington cognoscenti were aware of his involvement with a number of high-profile women. Among the romances that Seebohm details are his dalliances with philanthropist Mary Lasker; publisher Alicia Patterson Guggenheim; and socialites Brooke Astor, to whom he once proposed, and Ruth Field, the widow of Marshall Field.)

Stevenson was a Casanova of the billet-doux, and much of his love life was conducted by letter. Marietta and Stevenson developed code names for each other—Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, and Mr. and Mrs. Richardson—and arranged trysting spots at various friends' houses that they considered "safe." But throughout his affair with Marietta, Stevenson could not resist the pursuit of other women, artfully seducing them with endearing notes, apologies of neglect, and endless charm. To keep Marietta on edge, he frequently disclosed his other amorous encounters, and stockpiled in a drawer by his bed a number of poems and meditations of love that he would send, and receive, from various females. He also saved some of his paramours' love letters, which he called "tender bits."

After Stevenson's death, Marietta's personal life was in shambles. She was alienated from her daughters, model Penelope Tree and author Frances

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ponderance, whose "three grand imperatives," he explains, are "to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to prevent the barbarians from coming together." This, of course, was also the thinking behind the Pentagon's 1992 planning document, which argued that the United States must continue to dominate the international system by "discouraging the advanced industrialized nations from challenging our leadership or even aspiring to a larger global or regional role." (One of its authors characterized this strategy as one of "adult supervision.") This "leadership" role, as Brzezinski advocates it, means not only that the United States must dominate wealthy and technologically sophisticated states in Europe and East Asia—America's "allies"—but also that it must deal with such nuisances as Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, and Kim Jong Il, so that potential great powers (Germany, or a united Europe, and Japan) need not acquire the means to deal with those problems themselves.

THE GRAND CHESSBOARD: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives
by Zbigniew K. Brzezinski
Basic Books, $26

Pursuing such a strategy, as Brzezinski inadvertently makes clear, also entails a peculiar and esoteric calculation of the world situation. For instance, although most of us would believe that a reunified, democratic Korea would indisputably be in America's interests, Brzezinski, reflecting the views of the foreign policy elite, repeatedly explains how this development would endanger America's adult-supervision strategy: It would obviate the ostensible need for U.S. troops on the peninsula; which could lead to a U.S. pullback from East Asia; which could, in turn, lead to Japan "becoming militarily more self-sufficient"; which would lead to political, military, and economic rivalry among the region's states. From this point of view, the best situation is the status quo in Korea, which allows for U.S. forces to be stationed there indefinitely.

Of course, this global adult-supervision strategy means that America must spend nearly as much on national security as the rest of the world combined. Brzezinski admits that global dominance is "difficult, absorbing, and costly," and he does offer a way out, but his solution contradicts the entire strategy that he has defended. Although in the short- and mid-term Brzezinski asserts that continued U.S. worldwide preponderance is an absolute necessity, he argues—perhaps disingenuously since the subtitle of this book is *American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperative*—that in the long-term the United States can "share leadership." This is an oxymoronic formula. Multilateral enterprises, from juries to U.N. police actions, require a leader. The entire logic of Brzezinski's argument rests on the assertion that the indispensable foundation of cooperation and integration among the advanced industrialized countries was—and remains—American hegemony. Therefore, to hold that America can ever safely relinquish its hegemony because the political, economic, and military cooperation among the great powers ensures stability and peace is to put the cart before the horse. To Brzezinski, stability in Western Europe and East Asia, guaranteed by American preponderance, was the precondition for cooperation, not vice versa. There is no reason to believe that, without this guarantor, stability will take on a life of its own.

Thus it's no surprise that even though Brzezinski sketches the possibility of an eventual trilateral division of "leadership" among the United States, Europe, and Japan, he makes clear that, in fact, Europe and Japan would remain junior partners to a still-dominant America. This means that what Brzezinski is really proposing is that at some point in the future America try to stick its "partners" with more expenses while really granting them no greater authority or independence. Our "partners" have never cottoned to this formula, and have consistently and reasonably held that if the United States is going to lead, it's going to have to pay the costs and incur the risks that accompany leadership.

Brzezinski's book reveals the logic that has governed American national security strategy since the Cold War, but it also makes clear that this logic inevitably involves an imperial project that is perforce open-ended and permanent. Arguing for the maintenance of Washington's "Cold War" alliances, a high-ranking Pentagon official asked in 1992, "If we pull out, who knows what nervousness will result?" The problem, of course, is that we can never know. So, according to this logic, we must always stay.

BENJAMIN SCHWARZ *is executive editor of* World Policy Journal *and a contributing editor of* The Atlantic Monthly.

War Stories

by Thomas E. Ricks

ONE OF THE THINGS FOR which the 20th century will be remembered is some of the best war writing ever. In *The Soldiers' Tale*, Samuel Hynes, a World War II Marine pilot turned Princeton professor of literature, explains why. The common soldiers of previous centuries frequently were illiterate; their officers were professional soldiers who lacked the detachment that seems necessary to write a first-class memoir. "Until 1914 (the) recording and imagining class had not gone to war much—through the whole of the nineteenth century, for example, no major British writer had any direct experience of battle," Hynes observes.

Then came World War I. The 20th century's industrial-era wars of attrition required huge numbers of literate, middle-class civilians-turned-soldiers to fill the junior officer corps and the trenches. They retained the detachment of outsiders that permitted them to write about war as professional soldiers do not. What came marching back was an army of memorable novels, poems, and memoirs—*A Farewell to Arms*, the poems of Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves' *Good-bye to All That*, Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*.

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Hynes is less satisfied with the literary results of World War II, which may be because he rather arbitrarily excludes most (but not all) novels from his survey. For reasons that would have been interesting for him to explore, much of the most noteworthy writing out of that war came in the form of fiction—Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, for example. That's one reason I find his discussion of World War II less illuminating than his examination of World War I. The other reason is his generally spotty selection of World War II literature. How could he write about the air war over Germany, for example, and exclude the poems of Randall Jarrell? Why the arbitrary exclusion of the submarine memoirs of World War II—Edward Beach's *Run Silent, Run Deep*, or Eugene Fluckey's *Thunder Below*? Surely the German submarine experience of losing almost 90 percent of their operational boats could have been of interest as well.

THE SOLDIERS' TALE: Bearing Witness to Modern War
by Samuel Hynes
Penguin USA
$24.95

The discussion of the literature of Vietnam is far stronger, and should be read by anybody who thinks he understands that war. Vietnam, writes Hynes, "lingers in American minds like the memory of an illness." It is, he asserts in a fascinating analogy that was new to me, to the United States what the First World War was to Britain—"a war of national disillusionment that changed the way a generation thought about its country, its leaders, and war itself." Every war leaves its lasting image, he says, rather awkwardly calling it "the war in the head." In World War I, it was the surrealistic trenches of the western front; in World War II, the bombed-out buildings of cities; in Vietnam, it was the dead civilians. "Those dead children are everywhere in Vietnam narratives," he notes.

What Hynes doesn't note is the lack of post-Vietnam military memoirs. Sure, there have been no big wars. But there have been several smaller actions, from Beirut and Grenada to the Gulf War to Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti. But these are actions fought by an all-volunteer force, a professional military with little time for ironic detachment. To be sure, it is a military that does produce important books. In just the last year, two U.S. Army officers who served in the Gulf War have produced significant works—Col. Douglas Macgregor's *Breaking the Phalanx*, about the future of the Army, and Maj. H.R. McMasters' *Dereliction of Duty*, about the failures of the Vietnam-era Joint Chiefs of Staff. But these are both professional studies, holding far more in common with the memoirs of General Grant than with those of Robert Graves or Siegfried Sassoon or Joseph Heller. We may have seen the end of those sorts of books in our military.

THOMAS E. RICKS *is the author of* Making the Corps *and the Pentagon correspondent for* The Wall Street Journal.

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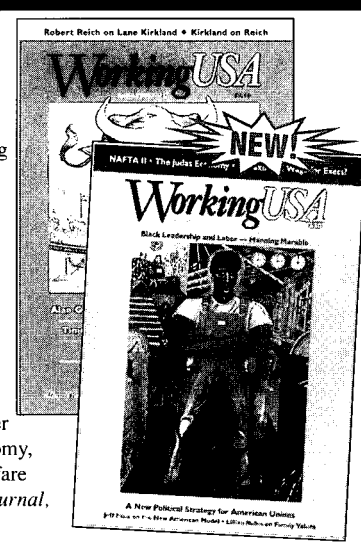

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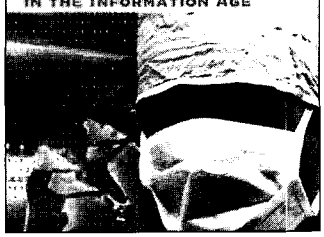

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Siamese Twins

by James Bennet

THIS IS A PROVOCATIVE AND often wise but ultimately unsatisfying book that ends just as it is gathering steam. After a rewarding historical account of the symbiosis between news reporting and governing (of which the saddest recent example was the death of a West Virginia woman killed by a police car engaged in a high-speed chase, with a TV crew in tow), after a solid but more familiar account of how that relationship operates today, Cook delivers himself of this notion: "It may be that newsmaking helps political actors in the short run but pushes them toward particular issues, concerns, and events and away from others, to the point that news values become political values, not only within the news media but within government as well."

As that namby-pamby "may be" suggests, Cook handles this interesting thought gingerly. Again leaving himself an out, he warns later that "to the extent" that the press does organize politics, it directs attention "toward episodic outcroppings rather than continuing conditions" and "away from abstract complexity toward simple if not simplistic renderings of problems, policies, and alternatives."

Now, for a guy who devotes countless pages to proving that the press is an "institution," and then to proving that it is moreover a "political institution," Cook is dismayingly stinting in developing this idea. Perhaps he is counting on our common sense to tell us it is true. But how true is it? By trying constantly to make news, are politicians making bad policy? And are they really reacting to the values of the new business, or simply to the ancient demands of politics updated for the information age?

This administration spends a lot of time thinking about the news media, and scores itself by the daily papers as well as by polls (although the LBJ tapes suggest that this obsession is not new). A day after *The New York Times* ran a front-page story in May about "heroin chic" in the fashion industry, Clinton criticized the trend in a speech to the U.S. Conference of Mayors. "You do not need to glamorize addiction to sell clothes," he said. The denunciation received widespread coverage. "Headline robbery!" one delighted Clinton aide crowed at me.

But drive-by social criticism is not substantive policy. Consider an example of the latter, the creation of Clinton's economic plan.

In *The Agenda*, Bob Woodward details the formulation and packaging of the plan. He describes Hillary Clinton explaining to aides how, to sustain public support in Arkansas for education reform, the Clintons set out to tell a "story" about reform, complete with beginning, middle, and end, as well as heroes and villains.

The aides quickly constructed what they called "The Story" to sell the president's economic strategy — before they had even figured out the plan's fundamental features. According to Woodward, the memo laying out The Story said that every day until Clinton announced his plan before Congress, he "should be in the media with an economic event stressing cuts in government and taxes on the rich."

Setting to one side Mrs. Clinton's somewhat checkered record as a media strategist, I would argue that political considerations, not "news values" propelled that White House policy. A popular sense that the economy was in deep trouble—not just the media's interest in that issue—led to the creation of the economic plan. The Story was just the means to enacting it by playing not only to the news media, but also to a perceived public desire for a compelling storyline to make sense of policy.

The White House embraced news values just to set the conditions under which the announcements were made (a backdrop of cops or a swarm of children). It chose the actual issues to be highlighted largely based on the public opinion surveys of Dick Morris. Morris is said to have scorned other White House officials for obsessing about headlines in the "elite media," preferring polls that showed what most Americans wanted.

The media may be the messenger, but politics is driving the system, and perhaps politics makes good policy.

But of course this system is not

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working very well—not because of a new encroachment of news values on politics but because of age-old weaknesses in both political and news values. There was every political reason for Clinton to stick to simple apple-pie issue in his campaign and not to address a more controversial and complex subject, like the future of Social Security—or, for that matter, the campaign finance system then collapsing around him.

And, often, there is every good news reason to let him get away with it.

In an aside, Cook notes that "newspersons are not a reflective bunch." Maybe, but many newspersons I know chafe at the way politicians set the agenda. Usually outside beats like mine, the news industry has been trying to elevate issues, like job insecurity or food safety, that politicians were ignoring. Responding to their own polling, the network news shows have virtually become health and safety reports, regardless of what official Washington is up to.

But stepping outside the official agenda becomes much harder on a beat, because it is a significant and valid part of the job to inform the audience of what your target politician is saying. Say the President is in Wichita, praising a welfare-to-work program and announcing a drop in the welfare rolls and complex new welfare regulations. Can you ignore him and nose around the program to see if it really works, or make calls back to Washington to investigate something else entirely? No. You have been assigned, properly, to write a story about the event, because the details, while incremental, are still significant elements in the running story of the changing welfare system.

You have an hour to parse the numbers and regulations and write 800 coherent words before the bus leaves.

Let's say the president wanders within earshot. (He didn't, and rarely does.) Do you ask him about Social Security—possibly creating an entirely different story but most likely just getting a wave—or do you ask him about welfare, hoping for an interesting comment to improve the piece you're already doing?

That kind of day-to-day grind notwithstanding, the press corps often does pursue stories outside the White House storyline. But it usually does so after those stories, like the campaign finance abuses, have already been thrust onto the public agenda and legitimized by other politicians. As a result, at Clinton's campaign-style events, the news is generally more complicit in the politics than vice-versa.

GOVERNING WITH THE NEWS: The News Media as a Political Institution
by Timothy E. Cook
University of Chicago, $48

Cook, who has a complex understanding of the relationship between governing and the news, provides a fascinating account of the origins of this complicity. In part, he is out to prove that the production of news has always been "centrally aided and abetted" by government policy and practice, and he does a nice job of backing up that thesis historically.

Originally, the aiding and abetting was direct. From Hamilton's redoubt at the Treasury Department, the Federalists let printing contracts to a sympathetic Philadelphia publisher. Jefferson reacted by encouraging a rival editor, appointing him clerk for foreign languages to support him and his semiweekly.

Contracts with individual printers to publish federal laws became a sure method for early American leaders to support the newspapers hewing to their line, but not the only one. Under Jackson, dozens of editors received political appointments, from customhouse collector to Librarian of Congress. And Jacksonians instituted nationwide pony expresses, Cook writes, partly so that editors in the west and south would be able to print news before the metropolitan papers arrived by mail.

The rise of the mass-circulation penny press in New York in the 1830s, the use of steam power and cheaper paper, and the establishment of the Government Printing Office in 1860 (no more fat printing contracts), cut the ties between papers and political sponsors and changed the very notion

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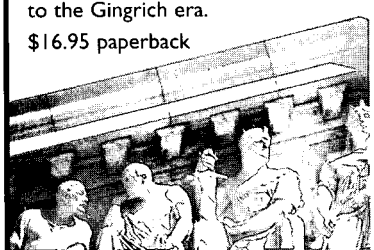

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of news. Paid for by advertising, newspapers no longer aimed so much at readers as voters, but at readers as consumers. They had also gone from a rag-tag collection of partisan, fragile journals (when Jefferson resigned as Secretary of State in 1793, his friendly editor lost his job and the paper died), to massive enterprises.

But Federal subsidies of the news did not end. They simply took different forms: lower postal rates, government support for the telegraph, allocation of the broadcast spectrum, and, in Cook's view, the public relations offices that proliferated through the bureaucracy.

Judging from Cook's account, it was at the turn of the century that the tacit agreement governing today's news beats was struck: Government officials realized that the press could be an efficient way to get the word out, and the press realized that the officials could make good copy.

The great innovator was the Agriculture Department. Through much of the 19th century, under pressure from Congress, the government tried to improve farming techniques by getting farmers the most up to date information, and bulletins distributed through the newspapers presented an obvious means. But Gifford Pinchot, who became chief of Agriculture's Forestry Division in 1898, sensed greater potential. Eager to push forest conservation and the creation of forest reserves (which his agency might supervise), he upped the volume of bulletins and began monitoring the results through clipping services. In 1905, he assembled a "press bureau" of ex-journalists, and started mailing out summaries of speeches and reports in the form of news stories.

At the White House, McKinley, in 1897, first invited reporters in past the gates where they gathered to grill entering and exiting officials. Later, McKinley even ordered his secretary to brief reporters every day. It was Teddy Roosevelt, that instinctual photo-opportunist, who set aside a separate room for the White House press corps. He delared: "The newspaper men—publishers, editors, reporters—are just as much public servants as are the men in the government service themselves."

This historical excavation provides a useful backdrop for Cook's discussion of how reporters and politicians have come to use each other. And he is persuasive on this subject, though other writers have made the case before. Yes, it is true that reporters, with an hour to file in Wichita, find it easier to judge style than content, and too often take that easy way out. Yes, reporters are too reliant on "official" sources, and too quick to define as news that which officials do. And it is often true, as Cook writes, that "the sine qua non of news is not conflict in and of itself but an endless series of conflicts and momentary conclusions." With an emphasis, I would add, on the "momentary."

But what do we do about all this? It is a source of enormous aggravation to beat reporters that media critics, blessed with more time to reflect, so rarely suggest any solutions for the press that have meaning in the real world. Cook, a political scientist, does not concern himself with improving reportage. He focuses instead on freeing politicians from the grip of the news media.

I think that is backwards, for two reasons. First, if, as Cook writes, the press has become a branch of government, then we should take advantage of that and use it to push important issues onto the agenda. Second, I think politicians already are breaking free of the news media. With the Internet and cable television fracturing the audience, wonderfully diversifying the coverage, and providing more opportunities for direct access to audiences, I wonder how the mainstream media can stay relevant.

I hope the answer, at least for Washington coverage, will lie in consistent editorial sorting of the official news of the day; clear and reliable reporting and interpretation of what politicians are doing; and an ability, still under development within the news business, to spot and raise important stories long before the Dick Morrises of the world are prepared to have their candidates face them. News values might then start interfering more in political values, the right way.

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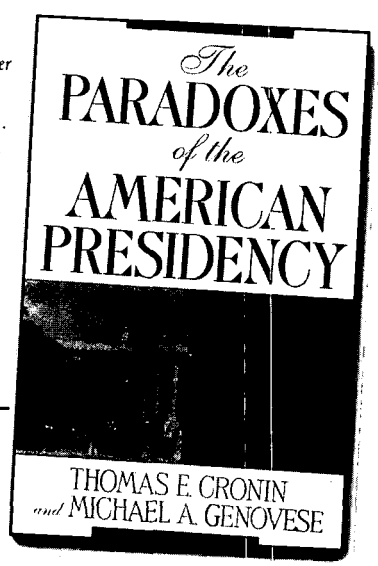

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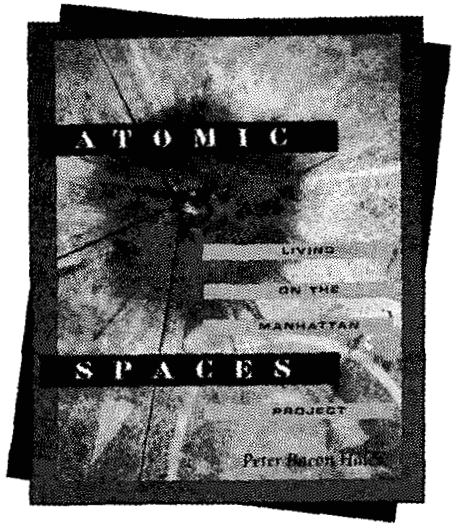

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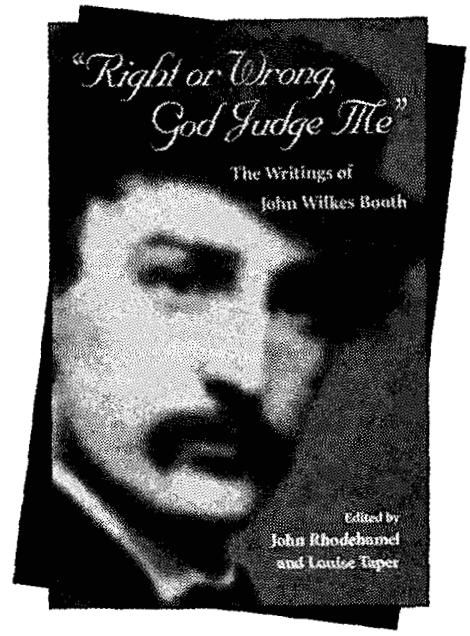

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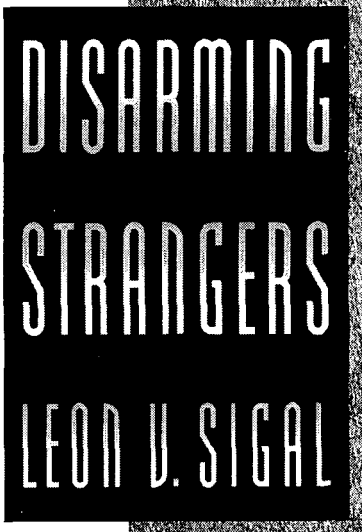

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